TWO IN THE WILDERNESS

STANLEY WASHBURN

Miss Garner.

1934

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TWO IN THE WILDERNESS

By
STANLEY WASHBURN
Author of
"Trails, Trappers and Tenderfeet,"
"Nogi," "The Cable Game"

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Preface

THE country in which this simple narrative is set is that vast New Empire of Western Canada lying in Eastern British Columbia and Western Alberta that is just now being opened up by the new line of the GRAND TRUNK PACIFIC railroad that in its last lap between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans is piercing a thousand miles of hitherto all but impassable wilderness.

The names of the rivers and valleys have been altered in the story that the writer might not be tied too exactly to a geography which was not always convenient to the plans of his characters. The "Big River" is the Fraser in its upper reaches. The valley toward the head of which Smith made his "strike" is that of the Beaver, a tributary to the Fraser. The camp ground where they left the lonely grave is a real camp ground just where the Shushwap joins the Fraser and is situated not two hundred yards from the steel span of the Grand Trunk railway bridge across that tributary. The "Big Cañon" is the Grand Cañon of the Fraser, while the Sheep Rapids is the Goat River Rapids which the author took the liberty of altering a little to suit his needs and then shifting bodily some scores of miles to a point where he could use it more handily in his story. The "flat on the river" is near the site of the old Tête Jaune Cache, and if one looks closely from the train which is across the river one can

see quite distinctly the "lone spruce" where the man and the girl camped after leaving their canoe.

The Pass in the Mountains is the Yellowhead Pass, and the interested passenger who will take the trouble to look out of the window can trace along the hill-side and in the valley "the old trail" that the hero and heroine travelled. The camp ground mentioned at the beginning of chapter fifteen was a favourite one of the author's when the steel was still four hundred miles away, but to-day is a corner lot in the town of Jasper, a division on the Grand Trunk railroad. The "other great river" mentioned is the Athebasca, and the pass where the snow came so heavily is a real pass that is tucked in among the glaciers and is situated between the heads of the Sanwapitii and Brazeau rivers. The "little white horse" was drowned in the Saskatchewan river just above its junction with Bear Creek, and the cañon across which Smith threw the tree when he went to hunt for his little four-footed friend is on the same Creek a few miles above the point where it enters the Saskatchewan. The log, too, is still across the cañon, unless some wilful person has cut it loose since the author last trailed that way. The horse is a real horse, the dog a real dog, and the man a near-real man. As for the girl—well, she was as real as the writer, who doesn't pretend to know girls, could make her, and he hopes a lenient public will approve.

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TWO IN THE WILDERNESS

CHAPTER I

IT was barely light enough to pick one's way through the heavy under jungle of the British Columbia forest when the man stumbled into the clearing beside the turbulent stream. To the East loomed the main range of the giant Rockies that marches sedately toward the North in a stately line which stretches in an unbroken phalanx of jagged peaks and barren flanks until it merges itself in the chaos of the Alaskan and Arctic geography. The stream that murmured and gossiped as it slipped busily past the little clearing, took its head among the glaciers of the range, and five miles from this spot poured its volume of blue water into the great silent, deep-flowing stream of a mighty river, which, heading between the ranges of the interior mountains, winds its way through valleys and cañons for hundreds of miles until at last it mingles its sullen ice-born torrent with the waters of the wide Pacific.

On all sides lay the density of the virgin forest. Great cedars that measured seven, eight and nine feet in diameter at the butt, soared in dignified

grandeur above the all but impassable abattis of the under jungle. Here, below, in the nether world, trees of lesser growth strove to shove their branches up toward the sunlight that filtered dimly even at noonday into this lower zone, where the rank growth of the heavy vegetation of the Pacific slope, with its creepers, great ferns and velvety moss, made progress toilsome to a man, and any other means of transportation impossible. As the only known trails ran, it was six hundred miles to the nearest Eastern settlement and nearly as far to civilization if one travelled toward the West. In short, this particular spot was about as far off the map as one could get on the North American continent, in the closing decade of the nineteenth century, unless one excepts the great areas of the Frozen North.

The man stumbled wearily into the clearing beside the brook and for half a minute stood looking about him, his eyes taking in every detail of the little vista. Four great cedars stood one at each corner forming a perfect square, while a couple of low-limbed spruce, squeezed in between, hung their branches across the little stage thus cleared by nature in the very midst of the wild and rank growth of the British Columbia wilderness. Centuries of time had carpeted the ground beneath the spruce, feet deep in needles. On three sides the dense forest, now growing blacker

each minute in the fading light, hemmed in the opening; on the fourth flowed the stream. After a brief survey the man turned slowly round, and with a quick movement drove the axe, which he carried in his right hand, into the bark of the nearest tree with an energy that left it sticking there with the handle vibrating like a tuning fork. Then with a shrug of the shoulders he let his heavy pack slide from his back on to the ground as he murmured to himself in the almost inaudible whisper common to men who are much alone in the wilds:

"Too late to make my cache on the Big River to-night, but I don't know as I would be any better off there than here. She's a fine clear night and the ground looks pretty soft under the cedars, so about here's where we camp. I wonder what's become of Zing," and he gave a shrill whistle as he leaned his rifle gently against a tree. It was a long, sleek 30–40 Winchester, with sight filed down, and its shiny barrel and knocked up stock showed signs of long and hard usage.

Again he whistled and listened for some reply. A long way off sounded the faint choking bark of a dog. The man smiled a little shadow of a smile and then stretching his broad shoulders sighed contentedly. The relief of muscles and shoulders from the 60-pound pack that all these days had been tugging at him was keener than

a sensation. He walked slowly over to the stream and stood on a rock that jutted out into the little whirlpool, and with hat in hand stood drinking in the peace and serenity of the mountains.

The great wall of the range in the West stood out like black velvet against the sky, now a pearl grey, shot with the tints of a dying rose, while the ragged rims of the mountains toward the East had already been swallowed in the dusk of the coming night. Across the stream the jungle crowded to the very edge of the stream. But with the murmur of glowing waters a deep and unbroken silence lay like a blanket over all.

It was well on in August, and with the setting of the sun the last of the mosquitoes and flies had gone to bed, and there was nought in the cool of the evening to ruffle the physical content that the shedding of a pack brings after a long hard day upon the trail, or as in this case, a hard day where there is not, nor ever was a trail.

As the man stood motionless on the rock there came again the muffled bark, much nearer this time, and then after a few minutes the rustle of something moving in the underbrush; the man knew well enough what it was, but habit even more potent than analysis, made his eyes move swiftly to the tree beneath which stood the rifle, and again he smiled quietly as he realized in a vague way how an instinct developed

by years in the wilds moves more rapidly than does conscious effort. He turned slowly back toward the little clearing, and as he stepped off the rock there wriggled out of the brush a spot of black and yellow which in another second had placed a fine fat grouse at his feet. This was "Zing," a two-year-old Airedale terrier who stood now with soft brown eyes uplifted to his master and stump of tail vibrating joyfully as he laid his gift at his master's feet.

The man had dubbed him Zing because the first summer they had chummed together he had thought that the dog was the next fastest thing to a rifle ball, and almost as trustworthy. He could not very well call him "rifle ball," nor did "bullet" seem any more appropriate, but Zing did suggest the sound of a ball; so "Zing" was he dubbed, and by this name was he known to the few human denizens of the wilds that these two met in their wanderings through the great unknown zones of the almost trailless North. It was August now and the two had left the far-off settlement in early April. Towards the end of May they had met two trappers who had wintered in the Mountains and, delayed by snow, were just dragging into the settlements; and again in June they had crossed a distant river on a raft to spend an evening with two teppees of Indians, who, having sold their furs

and spent their money, were hitting back for a far-away country where living cost them nothing. Since then neither man nor dog had seen a human being. The man's eyes lighted as he picked up the bundle of feathers that the dog had placed at his feet, and he bent down to stroke the curly tan and black head.

"Good dog," he said. "I figured when I heard you bark that choky way that you had some supper for the old man, and he's sure greatly obliged," and he slapped the yellow flank appreciatively.

It was a common trick of the dog's to run about in the brush and look for the grouse or "fool-hen" as they are called out in that country. In August the chicks are fairly well grown, but the mothers are still with them, and when the dog ran into a covey it was a bad day when he didn't manage to pick up on the run one of the little ones, or as in this case, the mother herself. The man was all but out of grub, for he had been away from his cache on the Big River for two weeks; a couple of pounds of bacon, a few handfuls of flour in the bottom of an old dirty sack, and a pinch or two of coffee, was all that he had left; so he whistled cheerily as he knelt down and touched a match to the handful of needles, bark and broken branches which was the nucleus of his campfire. With his axe he lopped off a few

big lower limbs of the spruce, and with a few swift strokes had enough fire-wood for the cooking of his supper. While the dog lay with nose on paws and eyes thoughtfully following the rapid movements of his lord, the man prepared the simple supper that was to serve their needs: the bird with four strips of bacon, two for each of them, an old and somewhat soiled piece of baking-powder bread which he had cooked the night before, and a small pot of coffee. All was ready in fifteen minutes, and ten minutes thereafter the last morsel was gone.

When he had finished, the man arose and stretched himself, and before he lighted his pipe made his simple preparations for the night. With the head of his axe he smoothed out a place in the needles under the spruce tree for his blankets and spread them carefully. Then he dragged in a few old tree-trunks that were dry enough to burn, and cut and brought in enough fire-wood to last for the night and the early morning breakfast that would follow. He hung his pack up in the tree after taking out a bulging canvas sack which he threw with a chunk toward the fire, which was now burning brightly. Then he walked slowly over to the blaze and kicked in a few half-burned embers. Out of his trousers pocket he drew an old pipe, blackened with much use. He blew through the stem meditatively a

few times, and then from an almost empty pouch poured into the bowl a little stream of tobacco. Very carefully he refolded the pouch and placed it in his pocket. Then he stooped and picked up an ember and lighted his pipe. For several minutes he looked into the blaze, while the dog, head still on paws, watched him with deep, soft brown eyes. The man sat down on the ground, his legs crossed under him and, reaching out for the little sack, dropped it just in front of him. The dog rose, stretched himself and came closer, placing his shaggy head on his master's knee, with eyes that never wavered from the face above him. Almost unconsciously the hard strong hand stroked the yellow head, while the man gazed intently in the fire, watching a little blue flame come and go from a bit of log that was trying to blaze up. From time to time he puffed contentedly at the pipe. Twice it went out and twice he lighted it again from burning embers, the last time sucking hard to get a glow in the almost empty bowl. Finally he took it from his lips and knocked out the ash on the heel of his boot, took out the stem, blew through it, and carefully putting it back, replaced the pipe in his trouser's pocket. This done, he reached out for the sack which still lay on the ground before him. Untying the bit of buckskin that was wound tightly around its

mouth, he dumped the contents on the ground before him. The dog's eyes wandered to the bag and then back to the man's face, and his tail vibrated just a little. Then he sighed deeply and closed his eyes. He was a very happy and contented dog.

The man gazed long and thoughtfully at the contents of the sack. It had contained some fifteen pieces of a slate blue rock, ranging in size from the biggest, which was twice as large as a man's fist, to the smallest, which was no larger than a hen's egg. In all, the sack had weighed twenty-five pounds. The man picked up a piece of intermediate size and hefted it in his hand. He turned it over reflectively, and looked it over from all sides. It was studded with small blotches of yellow gold, some as large as kernels of wheat, while one little bit stuck out that was the size of a bean. If one looked closer still there could be seen a thin tracery of threads of yellow faintly outlined against the dull blue matrix.

The man showed no sign of enthusiasm, but every indication of intense interest. He picked up another piece, around which was wrapped an old rag. Carefully he undid it and a little strip of soiled paper fluttered out. On it was written in lead pencil, "The first strike—N.E. Corner." This piece was without so many blotches, but was a veritable network of the fine yellow tracery.

He examined each piece one by one with the closest scrutiny. All showed the threads of gold, many big grains of colour, and two had bits of the metal as big as marbles firmly imbedded in the heavy rock. With the same steady hand he placed his samples back in the bag, rewound the buckskin thong around the neck and tossed the whole back into his blankets that lay invitingly spread beneath the spruce. He pulled his knees up under his chin and clasped his hands over his legs and again his eyes searched out the reddest, deepest embers in the heart of his campfire. The dog rose and stretched himself, shoved his nose gently against the man's ribs, vibrated his stump of a tail a few seconds, and then turned and walked over to where the blankets lay under the tree, turned around a few times, and settled down in a little black and tan heap. He was ready for bed, whether his master was or not, and if the man could not take a hint—well, the dog could do no more. And so with his nose cuddled into his hindquarters he slept soundly.

He was a clean-limbed, vigorous type of a man as he sat before his campfire that night, alone but for his dog, in the very heart of the wilderness. He had a kindly, gentle face, redeemed from any suggestion of weakness by a firm, strong mouth that drooped just a little at the corners. The lines that gathered at the

corners of his eyes and the two creases that flanked his mouth gave at the first glance a subtle impression of determination and reserve strength. His features were regular and good, and beneath the brick-red tan and the stubble of a five weeks' beard there lingered an impression of refinement. The eyes were blue with an even darker blue faintly radiating from the pupil. The hands that clasped the knees were long and sinewy as was the forearm that just showed below the flannel shirt. His clothes were not much to look at, but considering five months on the trail were holding together fairly well. The heavy khaki trousers were torn in several places, but neat patches here and there suggested that those long fingers might show a deftness with the needle in repairing the tears when the owner had a few hours to spare. Heavy hobnailed boots that laced above the knee, clad the ample feet, while a thick blue flannel shirt clothed the body. A big blue, white-spotted cotton handkerchief was knotted around the neck, and on the back of his head was an old yellow campaign hat with a handcarved leather band, now almost black from long exposure to the weather. On the thin black belt that held up the trousers, was a hunting-knife in a sheath, and a little tobacco sack filled with cartridges for the rifle. In the pack that hung in the tree was a well-worn mackinaw

jacket, for use when the weather was rainy or unusually cold.

This in a general way was the appearance of the individual who sat and gazed steadily into the campfire. He was tired in every limb, but somehow he felt no inclination to sleep as his mind wandered back over the past seven years that had seen him roaming these valleys and over the mountains. He was just past twenty-two when he had drifted into the mountains for the first time, now nearly seven years ago. It had all come about through a difference of opinion with his father as to which of the many enterprises of the latter should swallow him up. The old man, worn with big responsibilities and irritable with a bad day at his office, had snapped at him rather sharply as to his future, and the boy, as stubborn in his way as the father, had volunteered the quick response that he intended to do as he pleased, and that he was quite capable of making his way without the aid, assistance, or advice of any one. With this rather impracticable determination for one who had been reared in luxury with a generous allowance at his disposal, the young man had left home filled with the confidence of youth in the ability to win wealth and recognition from the world with no other asset than his own character.

"Well, my boy," the father had said a little

sourly, but not ill-naturedly, when the son had told him of his determination, "go ahead. Go out in the world and butt your head against its rocks, and when you're ready to admit you can't get along without the old man, come back again and find the welcome for the prodigal son."

This last sentence had been responsible for the long, hard years of wandering and disappointments that had been the young man's portion.

The first months and years of his life in the West had been filled with the joy and novelty of the great wilderness, but as time slipped away and the months dragged into years, there came the longing to return home, and with it came an intense desire for success that might level the barrier of pride that stood between him and his past environment. At any time, as he well knew, and as his father's letters told him, he might come home and step into a position of wealth and influence. For the whole of one summer he was tempted, but he was not ready to admit that he had failed, and a good bit of float rock he had picked up just before the snow came, tempted him to linger until the following spring. He spent a whole year hunting for the lead and failed to find it. After that his pride loomed larger still, and he determined to stay on until he had won at least the semblance of success, for he had

not the slightest notion of returning to the East a self-admitted failure.

The years that followed had been hard ones. He had no longer sought for companionship, and few companions sought his company on the trail, for he had begun to get the name of a moody fellow who travelled so long and so fast and so continuously, that no normal man could keep the pace he set. For the last few years he had only been to the settlements in the spring, to sell his furs and lay in the few supplies he needed, or to pick up an extra horse or two for the coming season. By reputation he was known far and wide, but the intimates he had made in his early years—his "play years," as he thought of them now—had mostly drifted off to other parts, and few could claim more than a passing acquaintance with Jimmy Smith, as he was known on the trail. In these years he had travelled with his packtrain, canoes, and on foot, ten thousand miles of an empire of which few at that time had more than heard. From the Alaskan boundary to the far southern part of British Columbia and Alberta he had wandered into a hundred unnamed valleys. Thousands of miles he had made down the big rivers in canoes or on rafts, until at last he had come to feel himself a part of the mountains themselves.

The last year had been a bitter one, for he felt

that he was sentenced for life to the wilderness since with each year that passed he was more unwilling to accept the humiliation of returning with empty hands. For two years he had not written home. Two weeks before this very night he had decided that he would never show himself again, and then had come the great find. As he thought it all over now by his fire it seemed almost providential, and the whole had turned upon a mere whim. He had been sitting by his cache on the Big River after a long, hard trip up a tributary valley when his eye had fallen on a far away crack in the eastern range.

"I wonder," he had thought lazily to himself, "if the stream that comes out of that cañon doesn't head just over a summit from Caribou River, where I shot the big old bull two years ago?" And because he was discouraged with every other valley he had prospected, decided to make the trip over the range. He had searched the mouth of the stream three years before and had no confidence in finding anything, so started off in idle curiosity rather than with the idea of making that "strike" that every prospector dreams of locating sooner or later. It had proved a long way up to the summit. He had been away from his cache and his canoe on the Big River for a week when he made his find. In following down a little brook he had started a mountain

goat out of the brush. Firing at the game, he thought he hit it. Leaving his pack he followed the quarry to timber line, and while searching for a trace of blood he found a fragment of blue rock containing the tell-tale seams of gold.

Many men mistake other minerals for gold, but nobody ever mistakes gold for anything else. The man knew that if he could find the ledge whence the sample come his fortune would be made. That night and the next day he went at his task as only a man of iron muscle and faultless physique could have done. For six days he was on the mountain side from daylight until dark. From the place where he had picked up his one bit of rock on the edge of the timber beside a little creek he ranged for miles in all directions.

On the seventh day he found his ledge.

It was off in a little side cañon and so far above the timber line that a great finger of ice reaching down from a glacier lapped over one edge of it. He found his vein in five places within a hundred feet. At the first strike it was ten inches across and exposed for three feet. Further up the mountain was a patch of it two feet wide and ten feet long, and the other outcrops were of the same width. The samples from each outcrop looked the same. He had broken a hundred pieces and every one showed the

tracery and network of gold with here and there the little nuggets embedded in the blue. With infinite care he made a map of the immediate section, pacing off the distances and driving in his stakes, cut in the timber below. Of the rest of the country, he had a rough map, and it was a simple matter to sketch in his new valley so as to identify his claims sufficiently to secure title to them.

His fortune was made and he knew it the moment he had struck the first outcrop. There was enough in sight to run into hundreds of thousands. He knew that and was supremely satisfied. It was a good two days' travel back to his cache on the Big River, and he and his dog had made most of the hours of daylight, but night had caught him in the little clearing with still some five miles to do.

This, then, was the man who sat dreamily looking into the fire that night. He felt no great excitement, but rather a deep contentment. At last he had vindicated himself, and the seven years that had gone before, had not been wasted. He was still only twenty-nine, and he had made his stake. He rose and stretched himself, smiled thoughtfully, and then sought the warmth of the blankets, and soon he and the dog slept peacefully side by side.

CHAPTER II

IT was after seven the following morning before the man and the dog were on the trail. The day was perfect. The two had sat by their fire for half an hour after breakfast, before launching out on the five miles drag through the jungle to the cache on the Big River. It matters little how strong a man is or how accustomed to carrying a pack he may be ; he always hates that kind of transportation, and even the hardiest puts off until the last moment the hoisting of the heavy burden to the shoulders. And so it was with this man. For all the hundreds of days that he had tramped the wilderness with his pack, like an old man of the sea, tugging at his back, he never slipped into his harness in the morning without heaving a sigh of regret.

Once having taken up his burden he swung off through the forest, his rifle in his left hand and his axe in his right. For a while he followed the bank of the river, every now and then wading out into the stream to avoid cutting his way through the alderbrush and willows that in places

crowded close to the water. After an hour of swift walking he made a fifteen minute halt in a little opening, resting his pack on a dead log. Then he was off again, this time taking a line right through the forest and heading almost due West. The going was hard—desperately hard. The lower vegetation was a mat of creepers, huge ferns and decaying tree trunks, with here and there dense patches of alder and willow brush, while the floor was inches deep in moss and vegetable mould, which made the walking as tedious as wading through mud. Every little while a few acres of fallen timber would block the way, and the man would have to climb over the logs or else walk over the jam, jumping from trunk to trunk or walking along their columns, balancing himself with his rifle and axe like a tightrope walker, while the dog barking continuously nosed his way beneath the trees or laboriously climbed after his master. With all his energy and superb vigour it was after high noon before the man spied the glimmer of light ahead and heard the gentle ripple of the Big River, flowing serenely and deep as it moved slowly on its way to the ocean. Two minutes more brought him to its shore. He had come out only a few hundred yards above his cache, so keen was his sense of direction through the forest.

Here in an eddy of the river he had made a

clearing and thrown up a rough cabin three winters before when he had a trap line set out down this very valley. A great log rolled up close to a heap of ashes showed where many a campfire had burned in the past. A dozen charred ends lay around the fire. He unslung his pack and dropped it against the big log and walked slowly down to the river's bank. There, drawn up in the brush, was a roughly fashioned canoe, made from the trunk of a single cottonwood. It was fifteen feet long and two feet wide at its greatest beam. Having assured himself that his craft was safe, he turned and looked at the great sluggish stream two hundred yards wide that was slipping and sliding past with slappings and slushings of the muddy banks. "She's pretty high for August," he muttered to himself as his eye took in at a glance a big rock across the river, and a projecting tree trunk on his side, both of which were more submerged than when he had last seen them. Then with the almost automatic movement of the man used to studying the rise and fall of rivers in the wilds, he broke off a twig and stuck it just at water line.

These rivers are subject to such startling variation that the riverman's first instinct is to get a primitive gauge of the water, whether it be rising or falling, for one who is contemplating a trip up stream hesitates to "hit the river" on a

rising flow. "I'll just take it easy for a couple of hours," he thought to himself, "and see how she's coming before we make up our mind what to do next."

While he had been watching the river the dog had been watching him with an occasional contemplative look at the water, just as though he too knew what it was all about. When the man turned back to his shack, the dog gave a little yip as much as to say, "Yes, I think so too," and then trotted away ahead of him, and sat down in front of the ashes to await developments. In a few minutes the fire was burning briskly, and the cache in the shack being tapped, both man and dog had the first sumptuous meal in two weeks. Plenty of bacon, coffee with sugar and milk, two cans of jam, a tin of butter and a pail of cold rice cooked two weeks earlier. Here too was plenty of tobacco for the man, and after their meal he lay for a long time in the sun, his back against the log, and rested and dreamed the day dreams of the satisfied human being, as he watched the little insects humming and buzzing about in the sunlight. Zing lay beside him, nose on paws, looking contentedly at the smouldering fire, the smoke of which was drifting off in thin wisps through the overhanging trees. After a full hour of dozing and repose, the man rummaged through his cache and produced an iron mortar and pestle,

a tiny pair of scales and a well worn text book on mineralogy and prospecting. From his sack he took one of the smaller samples and weighed it carefully. It tipped the scales at seventeen ounces. He made a careful note of this on the fly leaf of his text book. Then he brought up from the river a great flat rock and placed it on the ground. With the head of the axe he broke up his sample into a dozen lesser fragments. These he placed in the mortar and for half an hour ground them up, every now and then taking out an especially hard bit and breaking it up with the axe on the rock. Soon the whole was ground up into a blue dust with great spots and flakes of gold sticking in it. This he transferred to his goldpan, and going down to the river he carefully washed away all of the blue rock mixture. There remained the dull gold. Much of the tracery had been ground into dust that was lighter than he had expected, but the kernels and grains brought up the weight.

He carefully weighed his dust on his scales. There was about three quarters of an ounce. He wrapped this up in a rag and placed the whole in an envelope which he put in the inside pocket of his mackinaw jacket. He figured for a few minutes on the fly leaf of a note book. Then for a long time he sat silent and thoughtful. His samples would average on assay well up into the

thousands to the ton. Of course the stuff would not, could not be expected to occur in any vast quantities. He knew a little of geology and his own impression was that what he had seen were lenses or " blowouts " as miners say, and he was very much of the opinion that he had seen perhaps the bulk of all there was in his claim. He went over his figures and carefully estimated the length and breadth of his various outcrops and then, to be conservative, allowed only a few feet of depth. Next he carefully weighed his biggest sample and roughly estimated the cubic volume in tons of his estimated gold bearing rock. He did not go into close calculations. There were enough tons right in sight to make him independent and that was all he really cared for. To him a hundred thousand was as good as a million. He was sure of that, and if it ran higher, well, so much the better for him. Of course it was a long way off, but he could pack it with horses and then by canoes ; he had enough of an outfit to do this turn.

For another hour he sat and thought. He figured every possible drawback, or disappointment that might creep in. He had been too long used to set backs and hard times to underestimate the chances of failure. Again and again he quizzed himself as to his find. He had a mind that was clear and logical, and now he thought

out every argument for and against his claims. The net result of his meditations was that his find was of great value, easily converted into the raw metal, and that he need give it no further worry or thought. Once he had reached his conclusion he dismissed the whole subject from his mind. He had brought to bear his best logic and had considered all the evidence he had. More he could not do, and with characteristic decision he swept it all from further consideration and his mind came back to immediate action.

What should he do next? Obviously there was no use lingering longer in the mountains this summer. He might as well strike at once for the settlements and the East. Next year he could make his clean-up.

There were two ways of getting out to civilization, one by going down the river and over dangerous rapids and through cañons that few dared attempt, the other by following up the Big River some two hundred miles to its head, and then with horses four hundred miles by trail to the nearest settlement. This was the only way he seriously considered, for up on a little flat where further navigation in canoes was impossible, he had left another cache and, more important still, five horses. One hundred miles East and South through a great pass in the range he had a third cache and two more horses. These caches and

animals made his return that way essential. He could get out a month quicker by travelling down the river. He knew that well, and neither rapids nor cañons had any terrors for him, though he realized their menace. Moreover, he could now well afford to abandon both caches and horses, but he knew that to leave his animals in the wilderness for the winter would mean starvation to them when the heavy snows came, and he never even considered that possibility.

He sighed a little as he thought of the long hard drag up the river, when he might so easily tumble into his canoe and slide down with the current. But his mind turned to little Snowball, his white saddle-horse, who had been with him now since the first year he came into the mountains. He thought of the joyful whinny of his pony when he should see him again, and of the soft, pendulous pink lips that would rub against his shoulders; then too there was sedate old Peace River, a sage, heavy old animal that he had owned for half a decade, and who had never failed in river, muskeg or in forest. He shook his head and sighed. Then he stooped and patted Zing, whose tail trembled violently, although he did not open his eyes.

"No, old boy," he murmured, "we couldn't leave the ponies up in that desolate flat this winter, not if we had a million in cash."

Presumably the dog thought so too, for his stub of a tail jerked a few times in acquiescence, and forthwith the plans of the two were determined.

Once his mind was made up the man was seized with the spirit of unrest. He strolled down to the river and looked at his watergauge. The wet mark on it was about as when he had put it in the mud a few hours before. He walked back to his fire now almost burned out, and with his toe kicked in a few charred ends and watched them smoulder and then blaze up feebly. It was nearly four o'clock in the afternoon, but there were still four hours of light on the river. If he started at once he could make the foot of the Sheep River rapids in two hours, and then if he felt like it and was not too tired, he would have time enough to pole his canoe up the bad water and camp in one of his old places just above the bend where the uproarious Sheep tumbles into the Big River, and both of them combined go cascading down the rapids that carry the name of the tributary stream. If he could get that far to-night, he thought, he could have an easy start the next day, and not have the hard work of the rapids to look forward to the first thing in the morning. If there was a disagreeable task ahead, he wanted to get to it and have it over at the first possible moment.

"Come on, Dog," he remarked, "I guess we'll

hit the river, just about as soon as we can pack up, so you get busy and don't keep the old man waiting," and he went into the shack and began to assemble and do up in compact packages and wrap in heavy canvas pack covers, the various articles of food and camp equipage which had constituted his cache. There was a small tent which he carried with him on his pack-train or when he had a canoe, for when the means of transportation made it available he aimed to be as comfortable as possible in the mountains. "Only a tenderfoot," he often thought to himself, "sleeps in the rain when he can have a tent, or eats poor food when he can have good."

When he packed on his back he always took the minimum, which rarely included even a tent. He knew how to make himself comfortable under a spruce tree even in a pouring rain; and anyway, as he figured it, he would rather be wet at night than lug extra weight all day long. Besides the tent there was a fifty pound sack of flour, two slabs of bacon and a few tins of jam and butter, also coffee, sugar, condensed milk and a few other luxuries of the trail. One rather heavy package contained a dozen books, a rare item in a trapper's pack. Every spring when he pulled out for the wilds he had several score of volumes to last him for his year's campaign in the mountains, for he meant to keep his mind in

touch with the doings of the world and current literature, even if his physical being was condemned to wander far from civilization and his fellows. When he finished a few of his volumes, he was accustomed to do them up carefully in a bit of pack cover and cache them in some convenient place, and there were a score of such packets scattered about over a thousand miles of trail. Once, three years before, he had met a party of foreign explorers off in the foothills east of the mountains, and had become deeply involved with one of them in a discussion on evolution, and to the surprise of his disputant he quoted a certain statement from Darwin's *Origin of Species*. His antagonist admitted with a good deal of shame that he had not read the book.

"Well," the reply had been, "about four days drive from here the trail crosses a creek. There is an old camp ground there just by the coming out place. There is one big pine tree behind the camp. You cannot miss it, as it has three big blazes on the North side. In the first crotch you will find a package of books, Darwin's *Origin of Species*, McLeod's *Elements of Political Economy* and three novels. You can take the Darwin if you like and leave it in that hole under the rock behind your tent, when you come back this way in the fall, and I'll pick it up the next time I'm here myself."

When he came to pack up his grub he carefully made a small separate package containing a little of everything and one package of matches. This he wrapped tightly in a bit of canvas and tucked up under one of the logs that held up the roof of his crude shack. Then he walked down to the river and with a few quick side strokes of his axe on a lone spruce, that could be seen from the river, he made a great white blaze and with a bit of charcoal scrawled—

"Cache.
Grub and matches.
Help yourself."

Then he turned to the dog who was sitting on his haunches watching the movements of his master with rapt attention, and remarked—

"You can never tell, Zing, who'll be the next chap that comes this way. Perhaps some poor devil that's half starved and is hustling for his life to get out of the country before snow comes. When he spots this blaze it'll sure cheer him up some, and if he's a careful, economical beggar there's enough grub here to run him down the river to the Hudson Bay Post—that is if he gets through the rapids and the Big Cañon. Of course, if he doesn't, he won't need the grub. You can see that for yourself old dog, can't you," and he looked at his Airedale for approval.

Zing saw the point at once and gave his assent

by three sharp appreciative barks and an intense jerking of his stump of a tail that wriggled in the dry leaves with a noise as faint as that of a young rattlesnake.

The man now launched his boat, having first seen to it that the lariat rope with which its bow was tied to a stump was fast. In fifteen minutes more his goods and chattels were stowed away in the narrow bow. Then he walked back to his smouldering embers and carefully stamped out the flames and poured a little water around the edges to be sure that it would not run after his departure. Wherever he moved came the dog. When the man stopped the dog stopped and sat down to observe if all was done just right. When the man moved off the dog ran ahead, making a whirl every few feet just to express his enthusiasm over the way his master was handling the situation. Now he ran down to the canoe and climbing quickly over the side crawled up in the bow and sat on his haunches waiting for the man to shove off. This was his usual place, and he took his position as much as to say "All right, old man, shove off, I am at my post." The man looked at him with a little smile and murmured, "Don't see how I ever lived without you, Zing."

"No more do I," replied the two-inch stump of tail.

The man picked up his ten foot poles with the

iron caps and pushed one carefully down under his packs. He tucked in a paddle in the same way and placed another one in the bottom of his boat where he could seize it quickly, rubbed his hands together, took a deep breath, and shoved his craft off into the river.

For a second it drifted idly in the eddy, and then the current caught it and swung it out toward the centre of the stream. But the man knew this game on the river as well as he knew the trail or any other part of his life in the wilderness. He stood in the stern with feet well braced and pole in his strong sinewy hands, his sleeves rolled well above the elbows and his yellow campaign hat firmly crammed down on his short dark hair. His long pole shot out and bit the hard sandy bottom in four feet of water.

The drift of the craft was arrested instantly. The pole bent perceptibly, the muscles of the man's forearm stood out, and slowly the nose of the canoe swung up stream close into the shore; then as the pole moved astern, the boat shot forward with a jerk, the man getting his full strength into the heave. Zing was thrown off his haunches into the bottom of the canoe, but crawled sheepishly back, this time lying down with his nose pointed up stream and his eyes watching every movement on the river. Out came the pole, the water running off of it in little rivulets; again it

caught the bottom just ahead of where the man stood in the canoe, bent slightly as with a dexterous movement he turned the nose in shore; then came the long, heavy shove dead astern, and again the light chip on the great current slid rippling forward through the water.

The two were fairly on their way up the turbulent stream of the Big River.

For half an hour they moved steadily up the current, the man dipping in his pole and heaving on it with the regular monotony of a pendulum. He became warm, and with a quick gesture snatched the cotton handkerchief from his neck and slipped it under his belt. Presently he jerked open the throat of his flannel shirt, disclosing the great cords of his brown throat that grew rigid and then relaxed, like the swallowing muscles of a great snake, as he applied his strength for the heavy shoves astern. After they had made a couple of miles the river swept around a bend bringing the current all on his side of the river and the eddies and slow drift on the opposite.

The man poled vigorously until the nose of his canoe passed the point of land and the current caught it with a jerk. Instantly he threw his pole into the canoe and dropping on his knees in the bottom of the boat caught up his paddle. With two swift powerful strokes he had his craft

breasting the flow of the river. Then with its nose pointed obliquely across to the opposite shore, he applied his energy in slow and vigorous strokes, each ending in a little swirl behind the canoe. The river was fairly rapid, and though he was gaining nothing up stream, he was moving toward the other shore. In a few minutes he dropped his paddle, and seizing the pole caught the bottom of the river and was soon slowly but surely driving his craft up through the dead water and eddies of the far side. Once he tied up to the bank and sat under a tree and smoked his pipe for a few minutes while Zing rummaged about in the brush, uttering yips of enthusiasm all the while. By seven o'clock they heard ahead the growing roar and tumult of the Sheep Rapids, and by eight the man had run his canoe into an eddy at the foot of the cascade which for a half mile came tumbling down over the rocks.

The sun had set and the peace and serenity of the after glow was on the river. Most men would have waited until the next day before tackling the hard pull up the watery stairway, but this man was not like other men. He strolled up the river a few hundred yards, studying with practised eye the stage of water. He knew this bit of river like a book. Many men would have portaged here and have spent a day on the job, just to be on the safe side. Few would have tackled

it alone under any circumstances, especially with only a little over an hour of daylight.

It is dangerous shooting rapids, but it is twenty times worse poleing up them, especially if one is alone, for a single slip of the pole, in a bad place, or worse still, a broken pole, means that in an instant the boat is caught like a chip in a whirlpool and man and boat are at the mercy of the rocks and currents. As long as the guiding hand keeps headway, and there is no slip, all goes well; but failure of eye, muscle, or pole for a fraction of a second means death, for it is practically hopeless to swim in these rock-tossed waters, which are as cold as the ice itself. And even if by great good luck a man does get out, he finds himself alone in a wilderness without food or means of obtaining any.

This man knew all of that and more, for he had studied these rivers for seven years and felt no false sense of security in navigating them. Indeed, he never tackled one without every nerve on the alert and each muscle strained to its uttermost; in this lay the explanation of his having worked so many dangerous streams without mishap. To him the struggle with the rivers was in the nature of a game, a conflict in which he with his puny strength arrayed himself against the massed forces of the river with its tons of whirling water and great black rocks ready to take

advantage of the slightest slip that he committed. He loved the fight, and hesitated hardly a moment in facing it this beautiful August night. He took up a notch in his black belt, tested both poles, rolled his sleeves up just a little higher, threw his hat into the bottom of the boat, rubbed his hands, and shoved off.

There was a channel, if one knew it, among the rocks on the west bank of the river until one got halfway up. Then there was a stretch of water perhaps fifty feet wide which ran like a millrace down the centre of the stream, and then on the other side began another intricate channel among ragged rocks by which the skilful might force their way up the balance of the rapids. The crossing was of course the dangerous place. One had a stretch of fifty yards of water in which a canoe could live, and then began the cascade of rocks. Shooting down stream one might do it without too great difficulty, but going up was a different matter, for it meant that the fifty feet of water must be crossed before the canoe could be carried the fifty yards down river and at this crossing there was no poleing bottom and one must depend entirely on the paddle.

The man understood all this and elected to take his chances. For the first bit of work up the rocky channel he cared little and exerted himself only enough to shove his craft up foot by foot.

But once underway there was no turning back, and in spite of himself he found it made him pant to push his boat ahead. But foot by foot he breasted the current, each time setting his pole with the greatest caution, until at last he faced the dangerous crossover. Wedging his pole under a great rock he held his canoe in the stream which tumbled white between him and the near shore, and white again on the far side, with the black, still torrent flowing between; below all was a chaos of white water and jagged rocks.

The man looked grim enough as he surveyed the situation. Then he remarked to the dog—

"Zing, old fellow, I think the Boss has taken a pretty long chance on this job, and I wish we'd waited until to-morrow, for she's sure getting dark, and if we don't get out of this mess in another half hour, we won't get out at all."

Zing seemed to appreciate his master's anxiety, for he looked very sober, as a dog should when his lord is in distress.

After a fraction of a minute the man remarked in a low tone—

"Well, old boy, we aren't making anything for ourselves in this place, so here goes."

He gave one mighty shove with his pole into the centre of the flow and then gripped his paddle. Instantly he was caught in the whirl and carried off down stream like a bit of bark. But

he knew how to ply a paddle and just how to make his strength count to the last ounce. With strokes that made the paddle creak he threw his whole being into every dip. The river was flowing fast and in spite of his supreme efforts he was being swept down with terrible rapidity. The roar of the white water was drowned by the tumult of his own pulses that beat like drums in his ears, as he exerted an energy that brought out the sweat in great drops on his brow and throat. In a moment it was all over and just above the first ragged rock he dropped his paddle and with his pole bit the bottom of the river. This as he well knew was his most dangerous moment. A single swerve of his bow would bring him sideways to the current and capsize him instantly. A single slip of his pole would be worse. The instant his pole caught bottom, he brought the nose of his canoe upstream, and the first danger was passed; then, slowly, he threw his whole strength on the pole.

This was his crisis and he knew it.

Under his whole weight the pole bent and creaked ominously. But it was well seasoned. He had seen to that, for when he trusted himself to these rivers he took no chances on poor tools. If he came to grief it would be for lack of strength and energy, not because he had been careless in his preparations. For a few seconds it seemed

as though in spite of all his precautions the pole would break, and then when in spite of its bending it still held, he feared that his exhausted muscles could not produce the energy to push against the water. For a fraction of a minute his life hung in the balance, and then with face purple with exertion, he forced his canoe slowly forward inch by inch up the stream. His next pole hold would put him into the upper channel. He made it by the narrowest margin, for his iron-shod tool struck a flat rock and slipped for four inches before it caught. For just that flash he gave himself up for lost, but the next instant he was in easier waters. Foot by foot he worked his way up among the rocks, with the light growing so dim that but for the white water he might have failed to find his way. At last he hit an eddy in the smooth water above the rapids, and in ten minutes more crossed the mouth of Sheep River and was poleing slowly around the bend.

He was thinking that he had been a fool to risk his life just when it seemed worth living, when every other thought was wiped from his mind, as he saw at one of his old camp grounds a great fire, and back among the trees the whiteness of two tents.

Five minutes later his canoe touched the beach; he made it fast and strode up the trail and came upon the camp among the trees.

CHAPTER III

TWO men were seated on a log. One of them got up as the man stepped out into the light from the fire. The other stared stupidly at him with no comment.

"Hello, stranger," drawled the first, "which way did you come from?" and before the other could reply, he queried with the first instinct of the trail.

"Have you had supper yet? No? Well then, Bill," to his companion who still sat inert on the log, "slap on some bacon and make a cup of tea for our friend here."

Then he walked over to the newcomer and extended a brown hand with the laconic comment—

"Brant, from the States. What's yours?"

The other smiled slowly and in the same style replied—

"Smith, from nowhere in particular. Thanks for the offer of a bite. I can sure use it. Just come up the river and it's been a hard pull," and he walked over to the fire and held his

hands, blue with four hours contact with the icy water that had been running off pole and paddle, over the blaze.

The man who had been sitting on the log got up and stumbled off into the shadow of the trees where some packs were piled and began to rummage around for the wherewithal of supper. He who called himself Brant stood looking furtively at his companion and then remarked—

"How far from here is them Sheep Rapids, we've hear'n on? I calculate it's them that's a'roared around the bend."

The other without taking his eyes from the fire answered—

"You guessed right the first time, old man; the rapids are just around the curve in the river."

There was a slight pause while the silent individual returned with a frying pan with six slices of bacon in it and a pail of water. He kicked out a place in the coals and shoved in the frying pan, and another on which he set the pail. The man from down the river watched him, with the silent comment to himself that he was just a sulky individual and a poor kind of cook. Brant, however, had his mind still on the river ahead.

"Be they some gingery rapids?" he asked, without looking up from the fire.

"Yes, they sure be," replied the stranger, half consciously falling into the other's lack of grammar. "Are you boys planning on going down the river?" and he looked up inquiringly.

With commendable brevity Brant replied—

"We be," and lapsed into silence.

"Know the river any?" queried the stranger.

"Can't say's I know this here one, but calculate me and Bill can handle a canoe in white water where the next feller can," and with a jerk of his head he indicated Bill who was setting out a plate and a coffee cup beside the log in anything but a hospitable manner; then he continued in a lower voice, "Him's some canoeman."

The stranger was not impressed with "him," who just at that moment snarled savagely to Zing who stood close by watching the preparations for supper, "Get out of here, you brute."

A frown passed over the face of the dog's master and a hot reply was on the tip of his tongue, but he controlled himself and in a perfectly even voice, called the dog over to him, and said in a low conversational tone—

"Go back to the canoe, boy, and watch her."

The terrier's stump drooped sadly and slowly as he walked back to the river.

"Never did like a damned dog about camp," grumbled the cook and canoeman. "Here's

your bite, stranger," and without another word he sat down on a stump and gazed into the fire.

"Much obliged," replied the guest, and forthwith attacked the food placed before him.

For several minutes no one spoke. Then Brant asked—

"Did you line up, brother?"

"No, poled up," was the laconic reply. Another silence followed. Then Bill, who had lighted a pipe, removed the same from his mouth with an observation to Brant which was perfectly audible to the man who was eating his supper.

"If this here chap can pole up after dark, we sure can run down in daylight," and putting his pipe in his mouth he puffed gloomily thereon.

The stranger finished his dinner and lighted his pipe, and after he had thought a few minutes he began slowly to Brant—

"Your pal here is right enough. You can make the rapids in daylight if you've a good canoe loaded light and know the channel. If you don't know it you won't make it at all. After you get through the rapids you've a clear stretch with only one easy rapid until you hit the big cañon. If the stage of water is low you can get through all right if you know canoeing. If she's high you cannot get through. At least, that's my judgment, and I know this river."

He that was called Bill smoked silently a few minutes and then said—

"Say, young fellow, I reckon you mean right, but me and Brant here was canoein' on worse creeks than this when you was playin' with rag dolls. Do you get me?" and he looked up with unmistakable hostility.

The guest glanced at Bill with more curiosity than anger. This was a new phenomenon to him. The few men he met in the mountains were only too eager for advice about the trails and rivers. Well, it was not his party, and if they wanted to stumble through and take their chances it was none of his business, so he only replied—

"Suit yourself, it makes no difference to me, but I lay you three to one you don't make it, and my advice would be——"

But what his advice was or would be was never known, for a woman's voice interrupted him in a soft, well modulated but icy tone—

"When we wish advice as to our movements, we will be pleased to so inform you. In the meantime, my own men are quite competent to decide our course of action, without the interference of strangers."

Smith rose slowly to his feet. He had never been so utterly amazed in his life; not at the words particularly, for he had scarcely heard

them, but at the miracle of seeing a woman in this distant spot on the map, where he travelled for months on end without meeting even an Indian or a half breed.

She must have been in that second tent all the time, he thought, the one back among the trees.

Then he looked at the woman, who now stepped closer so that the light of the fire fell on her face. If he stared at her it was because he was too surprised to remember that back where he was born and bred it was not considered good form to stare. She seemed about twenty-three years of age, and when he came to think it over afterwards was undoubtedly good looking, but the hostile, intolerant and almost insulting glance which she turned on him, rather dimmed any idea of beauty. All he realized was that she was a slim girl with grey eyes, and the manner of one who disliked even addressing such a tramp as himself. He stood before her rather stupidly, hat in hand, still gazing in wonder when she continued speaking; still in a low voice but with unconcealed impatience.

"Perhaps I have not made myself clear to you. I shall try to do so. We are on our way down the river. Our plans are made, and we do not care to change them." She stopped, tapping her foot impatiently on the ground

and then went on, "I will not tolerate interference with my men."

Bill sat on the log smiling disagreeably. Brant looked very much ashamed of her who spoke of him as one of "her men," but he said nothing and only looked at the fire. The last sentence addressed to the stranger was certainly clear enough and he was perfectly self-composed as he replied—

"Pardon me, madam, I had no idea there was a woman here or—" but he got no further, for she cut in, "no explanation is necessary, your refraining from interfering with my plans will be accepted as a full substitute," and her eyes met his with a cold antagonism that needed no further interpretation.

For the space of a few seconds he looked back at her, and then with a little quizzical smile, but with no further comment, he put on his hat and walked slowly back to his canoe where Zing greeted him joyfully with a yip of delight.

For a long time he stood looking off across the velvety blackness of the river that flowed with an almost inaudible murmur in strong contrast to the roar of the rapids below.

"Who in the world can she be," he thought to himself, "and what under heaven is she doing down the river with these two men, and where on earth did she come from?"

He tried to recall her appearance, but nothing remained in his mind but the hostile eyes, the cold, well-bred voice, and a general impression of neatness quite foreign to the trail. It certainly was the most remarkable thing that he had ever encountered in his life.

While he was standing looking across the river there was a rustle in the brush behind him. Zing gave a subdued bark, which was absorbed in a low growl, as his master spoke sharply to him; and the next instant Brant stood beside them. He was manifestly embarrassed, but all he said was—

"Sure a tartar, ain't she?" To the stranger that question needed no reply, and he only grunted as he asked—

"Who is she?"

"Damn if I know," was the answer, "except the old one calls her Dick, and this here Bill, this sulky guy what gave you the grub, he calls her Miss Dick. I calculate she's got another name, but I never hear'n it. Bill, he knows, but he didn't never tell me," and he paused and spat reflectively into the river. Then he added, "she sure handled you rough."

The other, whose mind was still puzzling over the mystery, said slowly, "The old one, who is the old one?"

"Oh, there's two on 'em," responded Brant,

who was genuinely glad to see a stranger. "The other's an old one and she's peaked and ain't doin' well at all. Fact is I think she's quite sick."

"Tell me what you know about them, Brant," was the next question.

"Sure I'll tell you all I know, but it ain't much. I had a trap line down south and ran over on to the Big River to do a bit of prospectin' this spring. Well, I ain't struck nothing 'cept bulldogs and mosquitoes, and was just goin' to pull my freight, when in came this here outfit through the Big Pass with thirty horses, half a dozen packers, and among 'em this here sour Bill, who is an imported product. These fellers is all plum, sick of their jobs. Well, they all makes a camp near me on the Little Flat near the cañon where the Big River comes out of the Pass. Then it seems like the old one ain't at all well and they camps there two weeks, and she don't improve none. This here Miss Dick, she's a restless, haughty one and don't talk much to any of the boys, but she's dead anxious to get out of the country. About this time long come's a breed and tells her how she can get down the river in ten days to a Hudson Bay Post where there's a doctor, and he sells her a skukem canoe so she can make the trip, and gives her a little plan of the river. Bill,

who's really a good man in a boat, and has been around a couple a years with the old one on similar jaunts in the east, he says he'll stick. The other boys is packers and don't know nothin' about the river, and she gets mad and haughty and pays them off and ships the whole outfit back to the settlements. She won't go that way again. She says, the forty days on the trail with the old one sick don't go with her. Well, Bill he finds that I'm a canoeman too, and persuades me to go. We make the deal, load the old one in the canoe and here we are, and that's all I know—and tain't much at that, be it?"

The stranger made no answer. He was thinking that it was nothing short of madness for these two men, neither of whom knew the river, to try and run these two women down the rapids and through the great cañon miles below. As far as the men were concerned, it made no particular difference, for that was their own lookout. But here were two women, one of them sick, and neither of them, as far as he could see, having the vaguest idea of the job that they had tackled. He mentioned his doubts to Brant.

"Oh, I guess we'll make out somehow," he replied dubiously, and then he added with a burst of frankness, "anyhow, I couldn't refuse the job. The young one's got plenty of dough,

all right, for she's payin' me $1000 for the trip. That's how anxious she is to get out of the country. Yes, sir, $1000 cold cash. I've got half of it in my jeans, and she's to give me the other when we land at the Hudson Bay Post. Hell, man, I couldn't refuse an offer like that, rapids or no rapids, now could I, pardner? "

The stranger stared out at the river.

" A lot of good your cash will do you if you break up on the rocks below here," he muttered. He paused a moment, and then went on—

" Now look here, Brant, I know this is none of my business, and I suppose you fellows will have to do as you think best. As your young lady forcibly remarked, it's not my affair. But take a tip from me, you and this Bill take the canoe to-morrow and run around the bend and tie up in the eddy. Then you fellows get out and spend the morning in sizing up the rapids, before you tackle them at all. And you want to do the same and a whole lot more before you try to make the big cañon, and don't try it at all, lady or no lady, if the water is above the big rock on the North side. If it is you'll never make it. Just take my word for it. And one thing more. When you and your sour Bill make your reconnaissance of this first rapid, keep in close to the west shore and do as I said, that is, tie up in the eddy, for there's a cross current

half-way out, and if it catches you, your only chance is to run the rapids, for you cannot go back again once she starts, I don't care how strong you are on the paddle. Are you listening?"

"Sure, I heard you, every word," rejoined Brant earnestly, "and I'll get Bill to run over with me in the morning—but what you going to do?" he ended up as his companion who had untied his boat began to shove off.

"Well, I'm obviously not welcome in this camp, and I'm going on up the river a mile or two to camp for the night. So long, old man, I wish you luck," and without another word he shoved off and commenced to pole his way up the Big River once more.

For a long time the one left on the bank gazed after him into the darkness and finally muttering, "Well now, he ain't a bad sort at that," he walked slowly back to the camp.

But the man in the canoe did not go to the camp up the river after all.

As soon as he was well above the glow of the fire, he dropped his pole and paddled swiftly across the stream; then turning the bow with one swift sweep of his paddle he let his canoe drift back down the current, with skilful hand cleared the point of land around the bend and with a few sure strokes brought his canoe into

the eddy above the rapids, and ran it ashore. Out jumped the dog and the man after him. Without making a fire he dragged his boat up in the brush after having first taken out his baggage.

"It is none of my business," he kept telling himself, "but I'm just going to camp around here until I see that outfit over the rapids. I cannot go to the cañon, but the water will be lower perhaps when they get there and they may make it. But I am not so sure about this one. This Bill may be a good man in his place, but I want to see how he and Brant handle a canoe in white water. The young lady certainly is no friend of mine, but after all she's a woman, and so's the 'old one,' as Brant calls her, and it doesn't seem right for me, who knows the river, to go off in a huff and leave these two women, certainly not until they get over the rapids."

Then without striking a match he spread his blankets back in the brush and soon both he and the dog, who was curled up close beside him, were sleeping the sleep of absolute physical weariness.

CHAPTER IV

SMITH, as our friend from down the river called himself, had not any very definite programme of what he would do in the morning. He had rather assumed that Brant, who seemed the most reasonable of the two men he had met the night before, would persuade his comrade to follow his suggestion of studying out the rapids before making the attempt to run them. He supposed as a matter of course that they would follow his direction and land in the eddy, and then walk down the bank and size up the situation. "When they see just how bad she is," he had thought, "they will figure on making a portage here and not taking any chances at all, even if it takes them a couple of days longer. When they come along here I'll have another chat with them, when the girl isn't about, and if necessary, I'll just stay over here a day or so and help them pack their boat through the brush and see them started in good shape down the river."

He was thoroughly tired, and so did not roll

out of his blankets as early as usual, feeling confident that he would hear the men when they landed in the eddy and that he could talk to them then.

The sun rose in a perfectly clear sky, and as he planned to stay over for that day at least, he turned over in his bed and went to sleep again. His manner of life was a somewhat irregular one, and often when it rained, or he planned not to move, he would lie in his camp until noon before he even boiled a cup of coffee. He could go for days when he was short-rationed and on a long hike, with only a few hours sleep; but when he was not in a hurry he would be off for several days and sleep for sixteen and eighteen hours on end. Thus it was that the morning was far advanced, and he was still in his blankets when he heard shouts on the river. He turned out of his nest rather leisurely, but quickened his movements as the sounds grew louder. He walked rapidly through the brush, and came out on the bank just in time to see a great long canoe swing around the bend in the river. In the stern was the man called Bill, and a husky looking individual he was in the day time, a man about fifty years old, he seemed, short, thick set and built like a bull. Brant was in the bow. At a glance Smith saw that both were thoroughly at home in a canoe.

When he saw them he called out, making a megaphone of his hands, "Swing her into the eddy," and then, "Look out for the cross current." But the men in the canoe seemed to be wrangling together. Brant stopped paddling and was evidently trying to explain something to his companion. For just a few seconds they drifted with the stream, when the danger seemed suddenly to dawn on the steersman and with swift strokes he began to paddle with all his might. Brant too gave way with his uttermost energy. Had the canoe been smaller there would have been less difficulty, but it was an enormous one, the biggest Smith had ever seen on the river, nearly forty feet long. The large surface exposed to the water gave great resistance. But both men were strong, and their efforts swung the bow in towards the eddy, but the stern drifted out in the current. Both realized their danger now, and the strength which they applied held the boat for a few seconds almost motionless in the stream; then inch by inch the grip of the running water began to suck her back toward the centre. Smith saw the situation at a glance. The boat was turning stern toward the rapids, and even with their uttermost efforts the men were slowly slipping backwards into the swiftest part of the current, where it dipped over the slide into the rapids.

"Hold her, boys! hold her, or you're done for!" he yelled, and dashed into the brush for his own canoe. He cursed the idiotic whim which had prompted him to draw his boat out of the river and hide it in the brush. Were she in the water now, he could push out in the eddy and throw them a lariat rope, and, paddling in dead water, could give them just the additional pull that would counterbalance the current dragging on the long canoe. Things happen quickly in these rivers. When the critical moment comes it lasts but a second. If one has the strength to pull against the stream, one gets out. If one does not have the requisite energy, it takes but a flash of time to determine the issue. Smith was in the brush only a few seconds, but as he emerged dragging his canoe over the sandy beach, he saw at once that he would be too late. Both canoemen knew what they were about, and as soon as they realized that it was beyond their strength to regain the eddy, they recognized instantly that their only chance was to shoot the rapids. But their decision came a second too late. With frantic efforts they tried to turn the canoe around so as to take the dip, bow first, but succeeded in getting it only half turned when they were swept over the crest, side on. Smith still holding the end of his canoe gazed in sickening horror at the sight. For just an instant the boat

drifted broadside with the stream, then struck a great boulder almost amidships and broke in two like a rotten log. Neither man uttered even a shout, but both disappeared instantly, and in two seconds there was not a sign of the tragedy that had taken place.

Smith, who had studied every turn of the rapids for half a mile, knew instinctively that nothing but a miracle could save either of the men, yet he could not stand idly by doing nothing, and so with long bounds he tore through the brush down the river bank. There was an eddy just below the rapids and he might at least catch one of the bodies there, if it was not battered to pieces on the ragged rocks. He ripped his shirt in three pieces and tore a great hole in his trouser leg as he pushed through the underbrush. When at last he came out on the beach below the rapids, he found the sun shining brightly on the stream, which for the next few miles flowed as smooth as a mirror, with no suggestion of the cruel tumult of the rapids.

His eye scanned the water, but not a sign could he see of even a chip to indicate that a canoe had gone to pieces on the rocks only a few minutes before. Still he was unwilling to give up, and for two hours he searched the beach up and down the stream. For two miles below the rapids he scanned every foot of the shoreline

for a possible footprint in case one of the men by some inconceivable chance might have crawled out. On the opposite shore was a cut bank where it would be impossible for any one to get out, and he did not consider that worth investigation. Finally he sat down under a great overhanging spruce and stared in dismal contemplation at the peaceful water that here was as quiet as a lake. Zing sat beside him with that sad and melancholy look of the Airedale when in repose. At last the man spoke, "Well, boy, I can't see as it's on us. I explained it all to Brant." Then he paused. "Anyhow, I don't think any two men living could have taken that big boat down those rapids in this stage of water. A fellow might do it in a small boat, but the channel is too twisty for a big one. Poor devils, they never had a show after the current got them." He stroked the dog silently and then continued, "It was a lucky thing they didn't tackle it with the whole outfit, women and all"—and he stopped suddenly, and then whistled softly through his teeth. "Good Lord, the women. Now what in hell is going to become of them?"

Their existence for the first time had flashed across his mind, which had been intent on the disaster that he had witnessed. If there was one thing on earth that he did not want, it was to see that irascible young woman again. As

he thought about her and his encounter of the night before, he began to feel a mild indignation. It was incredible to him that any one could so treat a stranger, especially out here in the wilds. He had not dwelt upon it much the night before, except with a little annoyance, for he never expected to see this girl again. Now even before he came to reason it out he felt instinctively that he was in for a very disagreeable experience. Even had she been a kindly and pleasant girl, this was the last thing in the world that he would have wanted to be burdened with —two women alone in the mountains. And then suddenly he remembered that one of them was sick besides, and he groaned aloud.

He was in a hurry to get out, and here, just at the start of his journey, he was left alone with two women. He felt no particular shyness, for in the days before he had come West he had known scores of girls, but as he had never met any that impressed him seriously he had no great interest in the sex. He admired and liked good women, had ideals about them, but they bored him just a little, for he did not understand them. Since he had been out in the West he had not spoken to half a dozen, barring a few squaws he had met on the trail. Now, at last he was in for it, and he ground his heel in the mud with disgust. He looked at his watch. It was almost

one o'clock and he had had no breakfast. He tightened his belt as he thought of it, and then with long swinging strides he set off for his camp. Once there he prepared a bite for himself and dog, for something told him that he might have a rather disagreeable time when he first appeared in the camp across the river, and that in the confusion eating might be overlooked.

It was nearly four when he stepped into his canoe and with great care poled up around the bend. He could see the tents across the river and a little smoke from the campfire, but there was no sign of any one about. He worked well above the camp and then paddled across the river and dropped back to the beach, where the water softly slapped the mud fifty feet from the tents. He pulled his canoe out of the stream and drew a long breath. He had a very definite idea that there were some very bad minutes ahead of him, and when he turned around his judgment was vindicated, for the flap of one of the tents opened and the girl of the night before walked down toward him. When she recognized him, her face flushed slightly, and she paused ten feet away with no uncertain hostility in her eyes.

As she stood there he had just a moment to look her over. It was broad daylight now, and the sun shining through the trees made little

traceries of light on the neat brown skirt and soft brown shirt waist that she wore. She had on no hat and the first thing that he noticed was her hair. It was not brown and it was not gold, but it was a sort of mixture, here dark and there lighter with streaks which in the sunlight reminded him of those little seams in his blue rock. Her nose was small, delicate and very straight, while her mouth might have been pretty had it not been so tightly compressed. Her complexion had that soft glow of health which suggests red blood just below the skin. In a word she was distinctly good looking. This was as far as his mental inventory went, for further thoughts of her looks were dispelled by the promptness with which she opened up her batteries on him.

"It is almost needless for me to ask you why you have returned," she began in an icy voice.

That struck him as a very strange beginning. Why could she imagine he had returned after his decidedly unpleasant reception of the night before? He felt interested in what she would say next.

She went on—

"I can see the whole thing; you went off last night and camped in the bushes somewhere until you saw my men go off this morning, and now you have come back to annoy two defenceless women!"

She paused, and he thought to himself that this defiant young woman with the sharp tongue was the last one in the world whom he would have placed in the list of the defenceless. Certainly no woman with such an acid tongue could ever be called quite that.

He looked at her mildly. She should have her full say before he opened his mouth. He made up his mind to that.

"Well, you are mistaken," she continued, "for we are not defenceless. You see I am armed"—and she indicated on her belt a holster, from which protruded the black butt of a formidable revolver—"and what is more I am not only not afraid to use a gun but I know how to do so. So you need not think you can alarm me in the smallest degree."

Smith was glad she did not draw it. That would have been too much.

Where in the world had she been brought up, he thought, to think that people nowadays packed guns in the mountains, and who in the world had ever given her such a character of the men of the trail as to make all this demonstration necessary?

Still he said nothing, but watched her quietly; finally, as she made no effort to continue, he said meekly, his eyes on the revolver: "You don't need it with me."

At this she snapped back, "We do not want you around here. You made enough trouble last night trying to persuade my men that it was unwise for them to go further with me. I never knew of anything so officious"—and she looked at him coldly—"just as though they could not go where you have been. My men will be back now any moment. They have gone to look into these so-called dangerous rapids, and when they return they will laugh at your exaggerated fears, just as I do now;" and she gave a scornful little snort which showed a series of perfectly white, small teeth.

The man felt very sorry for her. The sooner she knew the worst, the better for her. How should he tell her? He had to say something, and so he said the first thing that came into his head; which was—

"Your men are not coming back at all." For an instant she looked steadily at him and then, in a very low voice, asked, "Just what do you mean?"

He saw that he was in for it, and took the shortest route to the truth by replying—

"I mean that they won't come back because they are dead. They were both drowned in the rapids this morning. I saw them and have been looking for their bodies ever since. There now, you have the truth, and I'm sorry if I have

broken it bluntly to you;" and he stopped and looked down at his feet, for she had grown quite white.

For a second he could hear her quick breathing. Then she stepped up closer and in a low voice, but entirely without conviction, said:—

"I don't believe you. You are trying to frighten me."

He raised his eyes to hers, and for a moment looked directly into them. He had not meant to get angry, but this really seemed inexcusable; yet as he saw the growing terror in her face, his own glance softened, and he turned away as he said—

"Of that you must be the best judge."

He knew that she did believe him, and that it must be a great shock to her, and that it would be a worse one when she came to realize just what a position she was in herself. He could hear her breath come and go in little gasps, while she was manifestly trying to get control of herself. He turned slowly and walked back to the river, remarking quietly—

"I'll camp here I guess for the present, if you have no objection."

She started to reply, but thought better of it, and returned to her tent.

As for the man, he sat down on a log and taking a handkerchief carefully removed the perspira-

tion from his brow. "All things considered," he thought to himself, "this is about the worst mess I ever got into. But thank Heaven she knows the truth. It is her next move now and in the meantime I'll just have a quiet little smoke myself," and in his slow, painstaking way he filled and lighted his pipe, while Zing sat by his side, wriggling his stump of a tail whenever his master's look passed that way.

Before them peacefully and serenely flowed the river, its little waves lapping and washing against the end of the log on which sat the man.

CHAPTER V

FOR nearly an hour Smith sat undisturbed on the log by the river. When he heard footsteps behind him, he turned and got upon his feet. The girl once more stood before him. The look of hostility had given place to one of worry and anxiety, though there was a cold indifference in her voice as she addressed him—

"I believe," she said, "that you are telling the truth," and looked at him, as though she had paid him a great compliment, and that it was a distinct concession for her to admit anything of the kind. This attitude of suspicion annoyed him intensely. Never in his life, as far as he could remember, had any one doubted his word. Yet here was this supercilious young woman who seemed to take it for granted that he was an unreliable creature, and one who for choice would do the dishonourable thing. He could not see her point of view at all. On the other hand he had knocked about so much alone in the mountains that he had rather forgotten how different from the kind of men she was accustomed to see at home, a man with a five weeks beard, and clothes

bearing the marks of six months of hard wear might look to a city bred woman. Not thinking of this he simply set her down as the most gratuitously insulting and generally the most unpleasant young person he had ever encountered. But even as he reached this conclusion he admitted to himself that she certainly was nice to look at, and he wished she wouldn't spoil the effect constantly by such a haughty attitude.

He met her cold gaze calmly and inclined his head slightly as he replied without even a tinge of sarcasm, "Thank you very much, I am sure I appreciate your confidence."

She shot a quick look at him to see if he were in earnest, and as his face showed no sign of annoyance, she assumed that he was complimented by her. All of these men were to her as creatures from another stratum of society, men whom she hired, just as her father had hired coolies to beat the brush in India, when he was tiger hunting. The best that she had seen, and in whom she had the most trust, men like Bill, she put in the class of orderly soldiers, such as her army cousin had to black his boots and burnish up his equipment. All of them were at best in the servant class, but these of the West she thought were offensive because they did not know their position. She never doubted in her mind that this particular man must feel gratified at her confidence. She

had admitted by her statement that she had changed her mind in regard to his veracity, and in a subtle sort of way she felt that she had done a very magnanimous sort of thing.

Still looking at him she repeated, "Yes, I believe what you say. Now I will listen to your account of exactly what took place before I consider just what I shall have you do next, for of course I shall have to hire you now, I suppose," and she looked extremely annoyed. That the man would do as she ordered him was to her a matter of course.

"Won't you be seated?" said Smith, as he indicated the log on which he himself had been resting. A look of disapproval crossed the girl's face. "How offensive of this man," was her thought, "to speak to me in this way, just as though I were an equal instead of one who is on the point of taking him into employment." With dignity she refused his proffered seat and said shortly, "kindly explain to me all that you know of this affair."

He was not stupid and he read her thought in her face. Somehow this being made an inferior offended him even more than having his word doubted, but he only bowed politely as he began his story. He told her exactly what had happened and how. When he had finished she walked slowly down to the river and for a minute

or two dug the toe of her beautifully made, heavy camping boot into the mud. Then she came back.

"Of course these men were only servants," she said, "but they were human beings and I feel very, very badly that this accident should have happened. In a way I feel responsible. Before I even consider my future plans I must know absolutely that they are beyond any hope of assistance from us. It is bad enough to have men killed in my employ. They were paid, however, to accept the risks, and presumably knew what to expect when they took the employment. For that I cannot feel entirely responsible. I should, however, feel myself quite unworthy to employ labour, if I were failing in my duty to protect them. We will camp here for a few days while you will search carefully below the rapids and through the nearby woods to see if by any chance one of these unhappy men may have survived. I cannot leave here until I am sure that they are dead. It would be too sad if one having survived these rapids should afterwards starve to death."

She paused a moment and then with a shadow of annoyance on her face as of one who has an unpleasant subject to discuss, she asked—

"What wages do you expect?"

To Smith this was the most offensive thing she had said yet. A slow flush of anger mounted to his cheek, and he replied with great dignity—

"We will not discuss the subject. I am not accustomed to working for wages at all. My services are quite at your disposal."

She looked at him with a little surprise. What was he driving at? she wondered.

"How absurd," she said; "of course, if you work for me, I shall pay you. I am not accustomed to having people give me their labour."

She stopped and looked at him thoughtfully. He seemed a well set up man, and something about him suggested efficiency. Anyway, he was all that she could possibly hope to get out in the wilds, and he might as well be placated at the start. She had travelled a great deal in her life, and had had a good deal of experience in a certain world, and all of that experience had taught her that money could buy almost anything. She was not old enough, or broad enough to have yet realized that in her particular world she had been travelling in a groove and that she knew no more of the life outside it than she did of the inhabitants of Mars. The man was undoubtedly hanging back for a high price. Well, the circumstances were unusual and she would offer him a large sum; her one object just now was to get out of this howling wilderness, and money was no item to her. She had plenty of that, at least. So she said with a finality that seemed to end the conversation—

"I will pay you $20 a day and a bonus of $500 when we reach the settlements. No, I do not care to discuss it with you," she added hastily, as he began to reply somewhat angrily; "I have quite made up my mind. You may not understand these matters, and probably do not, but it is quite offensive to me to consider any other arrangement. So we will consider that as settled, and now you will greatly oblige me by getting me something to eat," and she turned away and walked back to the tent.

The audience was over, as Smith thought to himself. He stood looking after her, with the dog sitting at his feet. His face was a study; wrath, chagrin, annoyance, with just a shade of amusement were blended in his expression. At last he remarked quietly to the dog, "Well, Zing, we are now in the lady's employment it would seem," and with a little short laugh he walked up to the camp.

The girl came out and explained to him where he would find the various elements of a meal. He listened to her quizzically and made no reply. Evidently, she thought she had put him in his place and that there would be no trouble in the future, and she walked down to the river bank, and sat down on the log while she considered the plight she found herself in.

She was aroused a little later by the announce-

ment in a dignified voice, "Supper is ready."

She walked back to the camp fire. There was spread out a packcover set for two.

"My friend feels very badly to-night," she said, "and I will take something in to her. Until further instructions you need serve only myself outside."

Smith looked at her in sudden amazement. Then he felt himself growing angry. He might as well have it out with her now. He did not want to give offence, but he had not the vaguest idea of being made a servant of in this way. For a moment he stood looking down at her, and had she seen his expression she might not have sat so complacently eating the supper that he had cooked.

He cleared his throat.

She looked up at him as he began, "We might as well come to an understanding, you and I, first as last."

He got no further, for she jumped to her feet, her faced flushed with anger.

"Do you dare to address me in such a tone of voice," she flared out at him. "Who in the world are you to presume to speak so to me? I have told you what I expected of you. I have agreed to pay you a high wage. What is it you want? Is it more money?"

Smith had never lost his temper with a woman

since he could remember, but he was strongly tested now.

"Now listen," he said to her between his teeth. "I am going to have my say just for once. We are stranded here in this place. The last thing I cared for was to ever see you again. You grossly insulted me the other night, and have repeated your rudeness in almost every sentence. I came back to you only because I could not leave two helpless women alone in this desolate spot. Without me you will starve. With me you will get out. I will help you all I can, but from now on you will have to drop this supercilious attitude. I am not your servant, and what I do is what I feel it my duty to do, and not for your money or for any other motive. I shall always be glad to consult with you, but in the future I shall make the plans and not you." He paused.

The girl looked at him white with indignation. "You have said enough," she said in a very low and controlled voice. "You must know that what you say is impertinent, and I will not tolerate it. You imagine that because we two women are alone that you can bully us. You are mistaken. I have dealt with many men before. You are merely my employee and you must learn, and learn quickly too," with a little stamp of her foot, "to keep your place. It is I who will

make the decisions. I had intended to camp here a few days while you searched for traces of our unfortunate canoemen. I shall not wait a day longer now. Every moment that I am exposed to your effrontery is an annoyance. You will therefore prepare at daylight for us to continue our journey down the river. I shall leave it to your judgment whether we portage or shoot the rapids. You may know something about them. Do you understand ? " she ended up sharply, for something instinctively told her that she was not making any impression on this man who looked back at her with his annoyance quite apparent.

She was too angry herself to feel in the least afraid of him.

" Well," she snapped, " have I made my orders clear ? "

He looked at her for a short space before he replied—

" Yes, young woman, you have made yourself perfectly clear, but it is evident that I have not made myself clear at all. Now I do not wish to hurt your feelings, but you might as well get used to this relation of ours as quickly as you can. As I have said before it is not of my seeking. In the first place we are not going down the river at all."

" Not going down the river at all ? " she replied, as though the statement were too incredible to

be taken seriously, "what do you mean?"

"I mean just what I say," he replied slowly. "We are not going down the river at all. I have not the vaguest idea of taking two women down this stream in my canoe. It is too dangerous. If your friend, or aunt, or whatever she is, is well enough to travel, we will start up the river in the morning. If not, I will wait. Down the river we are not going. Now, have I made myself clear?" and he looked at her with a sternness such as she had never seen in the face of any man that had addressed her.

She looked steadily at him for the greater part of a minute. Neither spoke. At last she said, as though to herself, but loud enough for him to hear,

"Yes, I see. My first impression of you was quite correct. I have always rather prided myself on being a good judge of character. It is my misfortune in this unpleasant plight to have fallen in with a man of your stripe. I would have supposed that even here in this wilderness, even among men of your type, a woman in distress might have received a little chivalry. I cannot express my contempt for one so mean as to bully and take advantage of a girl alone in the wilds save for another woman, and that one sick. It is mean, low, incredibly low," and she gazed at him in such scorn that he felt that in some

curious way it was all true, and that he was behaving very badly.

Zing, who had been sitting behind him, arose and walked stiffly toward her. He did not know exactly what it was all about, but it was clear even to his doggy mind that this stranger was expressing hostility toward the being he worshipped, and as he came forward he uttered a low growl.

She glanced at the dog, switching aside her skirts as from some filthy creature, and then said to the man—

"Go ahead. Set your cur on me, if you will. It is quite what I expected."

Smith stood looking at her, red with anger, mortification and embarrassment. There did not seem much for him to say, for his every comment was misconstrued. He reached forward, and with a sharp word sent Zing back into the brush, and then in a very low voice he replied—

"It is futile for you to abuse me further, and rather cowardly too, I think. I have never wrangled with a woman in my life, and I do not intend to begin now. As I have told you before I am at your service, but this I think does not give you the privilege of attacking me in this way. I know this country, and know the safest way to get you and your friend out. I do not expect, or care for your approval. I shall take you out in

the way I see fit. After I have done so, we will never meet again, which if you will permit me to say so, will undoubtedly be a mutual pleasure. I have finished. You say you pride yourself on being a good judge of character. If you are, you will know that I am a man who is apt to do pretty nearly what he says he is going to do. It will be easier for all of us if you will accept my lead and make as little trouble as possible. The next few weeks are not going to be pleasant for me I assure you."

She stood looking at him with a scornful twist to her small firm mouth. He could not help thinking what a pity it was that such a really beautiful girl should have such an abominable disposition.

The girl did not take her eyes off of him. Finally she said, "Here in the wilderness it seems that might is right. I am helpless, and much as I hate to admit it I have no alternative. I wish to go down the river because my friend is ill and there lies quicker chances for medical assistance. You, because you have the might, refuse to take me down," and she looked at him spitefully.

The man groaned inwardly. This was certainly putting him entirely in the wrong. He was thrown off his balance a little by this haggling. As a matter of fact it was the first time she had

given him her reason for wishing to go down the river, and he told her so.

Her face lighted a little and she said—

"Oh, if you misunderstood my motives it is all right. You will go my way, then?" and she actually smiled just as though she had won out, and all was settled.

"What is the matter with your friend?" he parried, to get a little time.

He hated to try the lower cañon even by himself, and with an overloaded small canoe it was impossible to consider. To portage was almost equally impossible as the sheer mountains shut in the cañon on all sides. Two men might have managed to drag a boat along the mountain side for the ten miles of the cañon, but for one it was out of the question.

"My friend is ill, very ill," the girl replied slowly. "I do not know what the trouble is. Some sort of a fever, I think. She's been sick now for nearly a fortnight. That was why I insisted on coming this way. The Indian said it was possible and the rapids easy."

"What Indian," asked the man bluntly?

"Why, the one I bought the boat from," she replied."

"What did you pay for that boat?" he queried.

"I do not see that that has anything to do with it," she replied acidly, "I paid enough."

"Yes, so I imagine," Smith answered dryly. "Bad reputation for the rapids, no sale for Indian boat. Did that ever occur to you?" and then before she could interrupt him he asked: "Don't you think it would be a good idea if you let me see your friend? If she is too sick to travel, there is no use arguing about our route. We can decide our plans when we get ready to start."

He regretted his speech instantly, for it seemed like a concession. She looked at him for a minute, weighing in her mind what reply to make.

"But I have already decided to go down stream, as I have told you. She is sick, but she can travel in a canoe as easily as lie here in this God-forsaken spot. Anyway, you consented to do it when I told you my reason," she said, as she looked triumphantly at him.

It was obvious to the unfortunate man that he was no match with her when it came to twisting sentences, so he only replied—

"I have consented to nothing. But without going into that I want to see this sick woman. I may help her."

"You can see her if you promise to do as I told you to do," she said stubbornly.

"Well, I won't promise anything of the kind," he returned, thoroughly and absolutely out of patience. "Now let me go in and see if I can

do anything for your friend. She may be dying for all I know, and I want to see her."

His anger really was getting the better of him.

"Ah—" she said acidly, "not content with browbeating me, you would now force yourself in on a sick woman and frighten her to death. Well, I cannot stop you, though I warn you that I will hold you responsible if she has a turn for the worse."

He sighed heavily. What he thought to himself was, that it was supremely indifferent to him whether she died or not. The girl walked over and stood defiantly in the door of the tent.

He turned slowly around and sat down on the log. "Well," he said, "have it your own way. I'll not try to help her if you persist in being so stubborn about it."

Then he got up and walked down to his canoe, and began to move his baggage up under the bushes. This done, he stepped in and started to push off.

"Where are you going, if I may inquire?" asked the girl.

"No, I'm not leaving you," he said in answer to her look of apprehension; "I'm just going a few miles above here to see if I cannot pick up a bite of fresh meat. Life in your camp is too strenuous for me. I want a little peace," and without another word he shoved his canoe into the stream and began poleing her quietly up the river.

CHAPTER VI

IT was after sunset when Smith returned from his trip up the river. In the bottom of the canoe lay a great fat goose, which he had shot. He had no more than put his feet on the shore before the girl came walking down to meet him. She looked very anxious and worried, so much so, in fact, that she seemed to have forgotten their asperities of the early afternoon. She watched him drag his canoe out of the water, and then as she passed her hand, as brown as an Indian's, over her forehead, she said—

"I think my friend is not so well this evening. I'm almost glad you've come again, for I'm sure I do not know what to do for her at all. In fact, I'm desperately anxious about her. You can come in and look at her and see what you think yourself." She paused and brushed a stray lock of the wonderful coloured hair out of her eyes. She looked extremely winning, he thought, as he glanced at her out of the corner of his eye. Her hair was escaping from its

moorings in every direction, and long wisps were drifting about her neck and face.

"Please hurry," she added, as he slowly took out the goose; when she saw it her face showed a little interest, and coming over she held out her little hand as she said, "Oh, what a fine fat bird," and after appraising its weight carefully, she handed it back to him. Together they walked up to the tent, which was shared by the two women. As he passed the camp fire he tossed the big bird against the log with a sharp "Stay there, Zing" to the dog, and then as she lifted the flap of the tent, he entered, stooping his head a little as he did so.

It was just dusk outside, and for a moment he saw the interior only dimly. It was a large tent measuring 16 by 12. As his eyes became accustomed to the dull light, he looked about in astonishment. Two patent beds were set up, one on each side of the tent. Folding camp-chairs, a collapsible bath tub, a folding dresser, a table, and a dozen other fancy items of camp equipage stood about the canvas house. As he took it in, he made the mental note to himself that they must have stripped some outfitter of his stock to fix this place up. No wonder she had had thirty pack-horses and six packers, and no wonder that they needed a forty foot canoe to transport

it all in. But his eyes rested only a second on the furnishings, for the short, quick breathing of the sick woman made him look her way. She lay on one of the beds, clad in a rough, brown dress which was unbuttoned at the throat, but otherwise she was not undressed at all. A fine long knapped blanket was thrown over her and her arms lay outside the covering. She was a well built woman of advanced middle age, but it was too dark to distinguish her features. Smith threw his hat on the other bed and, drawing a camp-chair up to the cot, gently took the hand that lay impassively on the cover. The moment he touched it he looked around sharply at the girl, who was standing just behind him, her eyes fixed on the figure that lay so still and motionless. "Well," she said in a low voice, "what makes you look that way?"

He made no reply, but his heart sank a little, for the hand that he had touched was burning hot. He had expected to find a complaining woman, down with a touch of fever, or some trifling complaint. He slid his cool strong hands over hers and slipped the long sleeve above the wrist and his finger tips searched out the pulse. At first he could barely detect it, and then for a few seconds he felt a hard, quick beating and then a pause again. He knew little of medicine, but he realized that this high fever and irregular

pulse boded nothing good. He turned, and still holding the burning hand, asked for a candle. The girl fumbled about for several minutes hunting for one. The man felt a wave of resentment at her, for the confusion that reigned in the tent. With eyes accustomed to the light he took in a hopeless disorder of paraphernalia piled up all over the tent. Clothes, hunting outfit, patented devices for comfort, and a lot of inappropriate odds and ends such as he had never seen in the wilds before. Finally she handed him an unlighted candle. He struck a match and lighted it. Then shielding the flame with one hand he moved the light slowly toward the face. His first thought was that he wished he had been dealing with this woman and not the younger one. The face was not beautiful at all, but strong, self-reliant and practical. Here he thought was the real leader in this enterprise; no wonder the other had been helpless when this practical looking creature had been taken ill. He felt at once as though he were in contact with a man. The face was flushed deeply and the eyes met his with a blank stare. He moved the candle away so that the face was again in the shadow and stole a glance at his companion.

She saw his expression and at once murmured—

"Yes, that's what frightened me. She has

been very quiet for two days, but I never saw that look in her eyes before. What does it mean!"

He made no answer, but sat looking long and earnestly at the silent figure on the cot, slowly stroking his chin with his right hand, while with his left he held the candle near the ground, that the light might not strike the face of the sick woman. Two weeks ago, he was thinking to himself, a week ago, or even a few days ago, he might have made some sort of an effort, but obviously the fever was now at its height. He felt a sense of hopelessness such as he had never before experienced. Slowly he snuffed the candle, and got upon his feet and left the tent.

The girl followed him out to the campfire. She watched him with a little dazed look as he stooped down and picked up a few burned ends and threw them into the centre of the ashes, where they began to smoulder feebly.

"Well," she said impatiently, "what are you going to do?"

He returned her look in an absent-minded kind of way. The fact was that he was not thinking of her at all, but of the woman who lay in the tent.

"Yes, quite so," he said at last, "what am I going to do? Exactly," and he scooped up with his hands some pine needles and a few dead leaves, which he tossed on the fire.

A sudden cold chill seized the girl's heart.

"You think she is very ill?" she said almost in a whisper.

"Yes, very," he replied, looking at her thoughtfully. He was thinking that this girl was the most hopelessly irresponsible and incompetent young person he had ever known. Then he stood up.

"You asked me what I was going to do," he said shortly, "well, I'm going to get a good fire going, and then I'll get a bite of something for you to eat. I don't think we will sleep much to-night. At least, I do not expect to myself. Perhaps you can." And with no further comment, he jerked an axe out of a near-by log, where one of the unfortunate canoemen had left it, and with it in his hand stalked off into the woods.

In a few minutes the girl heard the regular chuck, chuck of an axe, and then the crashes as a tree came down. She stood looking into the fire and again heard the man at work. Evidently he was cutting up his tree, she thought to herself.

She was a girl who prior to this had never faced a critical decision in her life. She had been so long accustomed to being treated with respect and having her slightest word obeyed promptly, that she had always assumed as a

matter of course that what she did was just the right thing to do. Nobody had ever questioned her, and as she had always had others smoothing her way, it had never been necessary to meet any real emergency. Just now she was experiencing an unusual condition of mind. It had never remotely occurred to her that her companion would die. Even now it seemed like an impossible outcome of this trip. It had been hard enough to grasp the fact that the two canoemen had been drowned that morning, but now she was facing something very similar, but which hit her much more closely. She was very sorry for herself, and afraid even to think of what the night might bring forth. Then she tried to raise her spirits by pretending that the man was trying to frighten her, and to arouse herself into further indignation with him. But she had no success here, for her mind kept coming back to the woman in the tent. While she was still thinking about it, Smith came back with a great log over his shoulder, and carrying another by the axe, the blade of which was sunk deep into the bark. Several trips he made until he had enough wood to last until morning. Then he set to work on supper.

The girl went back in the tent and felt the hand of her friend. It was very hot. Then she tried to find the pulse, but she did not know

where to look for it within half an inch. Of matters of health and physiology, she was supremely ignorant. She spoke in a low voice to the silent figure. No answer came save the heavy breathing. She came back to the fire and sat down on the log, and with a sort of fascination watched the man preparing supper. He was very sure and very quick and very practical in all his movements. She could see that as she watched him cutting up the bacon, boiling the coffee, and slicing the goose up in fragments to go into the frying pan. His sleeves were rolled up to the elbow, and without doing so consciously she wondered vaguely what had caused the great scar that ran from the wrist to the elbow of his left arm.

At last he turned and remarked quietly—

"Supper's ready, Miss——" and he paused, for he did not know how to address her. Then he added, "You've never told me your name. What shall I call you?"

His question seemed to stir up her old hostility; she moved a little uneasily on the log, and was on the point of making some sharp rejoinder, but changed her mind. What was the use of all of this haughtiness? she thought; after all he seemed to be doing his best to please her, so she said in a low voice—

"It isn't really important for you to call me

anything, as I do not expect to talk with you very much. However, if it does seem necessary, you may call me Miss Dick. That is what the other men called me," and she hesitated a little, thinking that she was making too much of a concession to one whom she had intended to treat with consistent hauteur and dignity.

"All right," he said indifferently, as he stirred the bits of goose meat about in the frying-pan, and then as an afterthought added—

"Mine's Smith in these parts—Jimmy Smith. Supper's ready," and he passed her a plate and set the frying-pan full of hot meat down beside her. Then he filled a plate for himself and a cup of coffee, and with Zing at his heels walked down to the log by the river and sat down to eat by himself.

"When she wants company," he told himself, "she'll ask for it. We can eat by ourselves, Zing, just as we have for the last two years."

The girl, however, was in no mood to be left alone, and in a few minutes he heard her clear young voice calling—

"Smith. Smith. Will you please come here."

He walked back to the camp. She looked rather forlorn and helpless as she sat by the fire. It was quite dark now, and the red glare from the flames brought out the golden tints in her hair. He felt sorry for her. She looked

up at him with a haunted, worried expression.

"Well," she said in a very subdued voice, "What do you think about her?"

He studied her earnestly. There was no use bandying words, he thought, she might as well know the worst.

"I think she has a chance," he said at last, "but I think it's a slim one. We should know before morning. That's why I've cut all this wood here. She's past everything I can do for her. It is all up to her constitution and physical vitality. If she gets through the next day, she may live."

The girl looked at him incredulously.

"But you think she will live, don't you, Smith?" she asked, just as though a reassurance from him could make it so. She seemed very young and helpless, now that terror of the great shadow had stripped from her any sense of position and class distinction. Personally, he did not think there was a chance. He had seen a few men die, and his instinct told him that there was no hope. What was the use of trying to buoy up this girl who must face the issue when it came? He meant to tell her tactfully, but he didn't. All he said was—

"No, to be frank with you, I don't." Then he felt very sorry.

She looked at him in a dazed way.

"How blunt you are," she murmured, and then with her little delicate chin on her hands she gazed long and miserably into the fire. One by one tears began to roll down her cheeks and drop gently on to the ground. She made no attempt to conceal them, but pulled out a little handkerchief and made a few dabs at her eyes. Smith looked at the wisp of white with a kind of fascination. It was about ten inches square, of thin, thin linen, with delicately embroidered border, and in one corner were the letters D. W.

"What a child," he thought to himself, "to come out into this country with a thing like that. It isn't more than big enough to shove through my rifle barrel in one piece."

His voice was very gentle, however, as he said to her, while he squatted near the fire with his eyes on the blaze, "Still, while there's life there's hope."

She only shook her head sadly. Somehow she felt that the man's fears were only too well founded.

"Shouldn't we give her something to eat?" she asked at last.

He shook his head.

"If she is better in the morning it will be time enough," was all he said. She took a little consolation from the expressed possibility.

"Why don't you lie down a while," he asked, after a bit.

She got up almost immediately and started for the tent.

"I'll be here by the fire all night," he said, "in case you should want anything."

"Thanks," she said in a low voice, and disappeared from his view as the flap of the tent dropped behind her. In a few minutes she came back to the fire. He looked up at her inquiringly. She stared into the fire wringing her hands.

"She's worse, I think," she said at last in a low voice, "worse even than when we were there before. It's perfectly terrible, isn't it?" She looked at him appealingly, and then turning around suddenly, she put her head against a tree and began to sob softly.

Smith said nothing; he was very much embarrassed. He got up and threw a big log on the fire, sending the sparks in a great cloud up into the air.

"I'll have another look," he said presently, and he went back into the tent. This time he made no light and only felt the pulse. It was very weak with occasionally a series of rapid beatings. He heard a sound behind him. It was the girl standing in the door of the tent. She looked very slim and small as her figure was outlined against the red glow of the fire behind her. She came in and sat on the next cot and wrung her hands.

"Isn't there anything we can do?" she kept murmuring.

The man only shook his head. At last he got up and walked back to the fire.

Another hour passed and again the girl came to him.

It was cold and she was trembling a little.

"Haven't you a coat?" he asked as he looked at her.

For the first time she realized that she was cold.

"Yes, but I do not know where it is. My things are so mixed up." Smith offered her his mackinaw jacket, which she let him help her into. For a moment she stood warming her hands over the blaze.

"I must go back," she said at last. "It is my duty to be with her. But I'm afraid, oh, I am so afraid."

When she had gone, Smith lighted his pipe and smoked and thought over what was going on in the tent. Who was this woman, he wondered, that was dying way off here in the wilderness? Was she related to the girl? He thought not, for there seemed to be no great feeling on the part of the girl, at least not such as one would feel toward a near and dear relative.

About two o'clock in the morning he went to the door of the tent. It was very dark inside. He heard the heavy breathing, laboured and

coming in short, quick intakes between long pauses. He struck a light. The girl was sitting on a camp-chair, holding one of the hands. She looked at him wide-eyed, and terrified. She had not been asleep at all.

"No change," she said in a low voice.

Smith walked over and felt the pulse. He said nothing but returned to the campfire. Zing, who had been lying near-by, got up and stretched himself, putting his paws out in front of him with a luxurious yawn. Smith threw some more wood on the fire and watched it burn up briskly. He stroked the dog who came and crouched beside him.

The man muttered to himself. What he said was, "About dawn. Don't believe she'll last beyond."

Zing seemed to sense something wrong now, for he whined restlessly, and moved uneasily about the campfire, lay down, got up, seemed to find it difficult to make himself comfortable. Minutes slipped slowly by. Once Smith walked to the door of the tent and listened. The breathing was as before.

"Are you awake?" he asked in a whisper.

"Yes," came the reply in a low tense voice.

"Are you warm enough?" he asked.

"I think so," was the reply. Then she stepped to the door.

"What time is it?" she asked.

"Nearly three," he said; "look, it's just getting dawn," and he pointed to the East, where a faint glow just revealed the edge of the mountain wall.

"I think she's worse," whispered the girl, "isn't it terrible, away off like this in the mountains?" She paused, and they could hear the slop, slop of the river, while far off in the distance came the cry of a loon. She shivered.

"I'm so frightened," she whispered, "I have never been near death before, and I'm sure she is slipping away."

"Will you come out by the fire a bit?" he said kindly.

"No, I mustn't leave her. I'm sure I mustn't leave her," she murmured, as she crept back to her position by the bed.

Smith walked down to the river. It was just light enough to trace faintly the line of the opposite bank. Below and around the bend he heard the dull roar of the rapids. He felt cold and went back and put more wood on the fire. He sat down again and for the twentieth time filled his pipe. He struck a match and held it while it caught the blaze. Any one who knew him would have been surprised, for no old timer spends matches on a pipe when a campfire is burning. Suddenly a sound arrested his atten-

tion. It was a little sobbing cry of fright. He dropped the match. He heard his name called. He ran to the tent. Miss Dick came out trembling all over.

"I think she is dying," she said, her voice quavering pitifully. "Please come in." She was not the same cold, dignified girl of the day, and Smith wondered how such a change was possible; evidently, after all, she cared for this woman here.

He sat down on the camp-stool by the cot.

"She's still breathing," he said below his breath, "but she is going fast."

The girl went to the door of the tent and gazed out into the growing dawn. Already the trees were beginning to stand out in ghostly shadows. The light from the fire seemed to be pale and sickly. The mountain's rim stood out sharply, and a peak in the west was faintly tipped with pink. Suddenly Smith spoke. "Come," he said sharply.

The girl was at his side in a few steps and knelt down beside him.

He held the wrist.

Daylight was drifting into the tent door.

Some little birds were cheeping irresponsibly out in the brush.

In the light they could see the woman's face.

It had lost its colour. The head was thrown back and the eyes looked into space.

There was a faint little choking in the throat, and then silence. There came a long halting breath, and again silence.

The man leaned close to the figure on the bed.

There was another little gasp.

He dropped the hand.

It swung limply over the side of the cot. He picked it up and laid it across the body. He turned to his companion. She looked at him, her grey eyes big and round and terrified, the great question shining in their depths. Her mouth moved, but she brought forth no word. Smith looked at her pityingly.

"She's dead," he said, and quietly he pulled the great long knapped blanket over the drawn face.

Down by the campfire they heard a whimper, and then a long drawn out and melancholy howl.

It was the dog, who sensed in some curious way the misery and mystery of the moment.

The girl slid to the ground and sat with her face buried in her hands. The man stooped and placed his hand on her shoulder. "There, there," he said, "don't take it so hard." Then he walked to the flap of the tent.

The sun was just rising.

"It is going to be a fine day," he said to himself, and he set to the preparation of breakfast.

CHAPTER VII

WHEN Smith brought her some breakfast a little later, Miss Dick was sitting on the edge of her cot staring with vacant expression at the blanket-covered figure on the cot opposite. Her hair was dishevelled and she still wore the mackinaw jacket he had put on her during the night. Her small brown hands just showed beyond the long sleeves, and she looked very small and pathetic in the great coat that was miles too large for her. She started as he pushed open the flap of the tent.

"What is it?" she said, as though wakened from a dream.

"Breakfast," he replied.

"I do not want anything, thank you," she answered, without looking at him again, as her eyes with a sort of fascination went back to the silent figure on the cot. The sun was getting up now, and the bright light caused the trees outside to throw their shadows on the canvas of the tent. These moved back and forth in dissolving traceries as the branches of the overhanging trees swayed in the sunshine. He

looked at her intently. All signs of her emotional outburst were gone. Her face looked very haggard, hard and set. She evidently had herself well in hand. He would see no more of the soft girlish side which the horrors of the night had brought forth, he thought, as he studied the fine lines of her small head which emerged from the great rough collar of his coat, which was turned up about her neck. When she realized that she was wearing his coat, she would take it off, he reflected. In the meantime he stood holding the plate of breakfast in one hand and a pot of steaming coffee in the other.

"You may not want it," he said slowly, "but I think you need it. Now, Miss Dick, without wishing to offend you I must ask you to take something. We have a hard long trip ahead of us, and it won't do for you to make yourself sick."

She turned a rather dignified little face toward him, and at last replied indifferently—

"Very well, perhaps you are right. Just set it down here on the bed, and please leave me. I do not think I feel like talking now."

He did as she suggested and withdrew. He went down to the river and brought up two pails of the cloudy glacier water and set them by the flap of the tent, remarking—

"Here's some water, Miss Dick," and then

went back to the river himself. He did not know much of the habits of women in the wilderness, but the big collapsible washtub suggested that these women at least went in for morning bathing. He felt somewhat bedraggled himself. He had not slept at all during the night, and the day before had not been particularly restful. He walked a couple of hundred yards up the stream, where he was entirely out of sight of the camp, and stripping off his clothes took a dip in the river. It was like ice water, and after a few swift strokes in the stream he climbed out on the bank again. Zing, who had followed him to the bank, ran up and down the side and barked. Twice he waded out for a few feet, but the water was too cold for him and he ran back and curled up near his master's clothes. Smith came out of the water. He had brought no towel. In his clothes he had two big handkerchiefs, and with these he rubbed his body until it was pink with the reaction that a cold dip brings to a healthy human being. Then he dressed and went back to camp. The sun was well up now, and the flies and little insects were coming out of the nooks and cracks where the cold of the night had banished them. He sat on the log and watched the fire, thinking of the girl in the tent.

Near the log was a piece of raw goose meat which had fallen out of the frying-pan the night

before. On it buzzed and crept several large flies.

A frown passed over his face. It suggested something.

He thought a moment. He had noticed a trench dug around the women's tent. There must be a shovel in camp. He began to hunt for it. At last he found it stuck in the ground behind a tree.

An hour later when Miss Dick came out of her tent she did not see him. She looked around. Then she listened. A little way off she heard movements in the brush. She walked toward the sound. Smith was digging a grave. Already he had made quite a trench and was in the hole up to his knees. Zing sat on his haunches on the newly turned earth. The man's hat was hung up on a near-by stump. His sleeves were rolled up. He stopped and leaned on his shovel as she came forcing her way through the bushes. Neither of them spoke for a moment. The dog walked over to her a little suspiciously. Unconsciously she patted his shaggy brown head. His stump of a tail jerked three times. Undoubtedly they would be friends now, and Smith who took account of it was glad, for he loved his dog, and it had hurt him to hear the girl speak of him as a cur.

At last Miss Dick spoke.

"You are making a grave," she said slowly,

just as though she had made a statement of importance.

"Yes," he said; "the sooner we get away from here the better."

Strange as it may seem, the girl had not once thought of the immediate future. She had spent the first hours trying to realize how it had all happened. For the first time in her life she found herself in contact with death, death in its most tragic form. She had been stunned. It had all come and gone so quickly. But yesterday her friend had known her and spoken to her, feebly to be sure, but still intelligently. She had said nothing of death. Had she known? To-day she was gone. Still and cold she lay in the little tent. Now this man, whom until less than two days ago she had never seen, was digging a grave. He was going to put the body into the hole. She had seen funerals before, but never anything like this. Always graves banked with flowers, up to which carpets stretched from the carriages. Beautifully finished coffins were carried up by dignified looking pall-bearers in frock coats and black gloves with crêpe-trimmed high hats in their free hands. Never did one see the black cold earth at these funerals. The undertaker took care of that. Here it was different.

Smith still leaned on his shovel. He was hot, and mopped his brow with one of his cotton

handkerchiefs. In the newly turned earth ants and some little creeping things with many legs were scurrying about. Birds were twittering in the brush about them, and not far away the Big River moved on its way to the Pacific with the steady slop, slop of its waters washing the banks. In the distance Miss Dick heard the dull roar of the rapids. Smith watched her. She had taken off his coat and wore a dark red blanket-coat of her own. It fitted wonderfully and looked as though it had been moulded around her firm little bust. It came in with perfect exactness where it snuggled close to the small of her back. On the upper left breast was a pocket with an elaborate monogram in dark green silk. What an astonishing garment for this wilderness, thought the man. Her skirt was of heavy, dark brown wool with a wonderful pattern in varying shades of brown worked into it. Her shirt waist was of a heavily woven dark brown silk with a collar that turned back over her shoulders. A dark red tie was done in a bow under her chin. She looked fresh and clean, but her face was very white, drawn and haggard. At last she asked—

"Must we leave her?"

He looked at her kindly. Of course she must know better than to ask such a question, but he felt she hardly knew what she was saying.

"Yes, I'm afraid we must," he replied, after hesitating just as though he were really considering an alternative.

"Do you mind if I sit here on this log and watch you?" she asked at last, "I hate to stay in that dreadful place? Something frightens me so. I don't know what,"—and her voice dragged off into silence as she sat down on the log and folded her hands and stared miserably into the hole he was digging. Zing came and put his nose in her lap and looked up at her with his steady, brown eyes. He was a very sympathetic dog, and in his way wanted to help if he could. Something was wrong, he knew; just what, was beyond him. She patted his head, and at last, as she noticed his nice brown affectionate eyes, she put her head close to his ear. Smith began to dig again. He did not hear her whisper, "Forgive me for calling you a cur yesterday. You are not at all. I think you are a very gentle dog. We two must be friends, dear." Whether Zing understood or not, his tail vibrated vigorously and that was an excellent sign.

For a long time Smith worked in silence. Miss Dick watched him intently. He dug very well, she thought. She had never noticed any one digging before. She had an idea that it took much longer. After a while he stopped. She walked over and looked into the hole. The ground was

very black and seemed quite soft. He glanced up at her. She looked at him. Evidently he was supposed to say something.

"Is it deep enough?" he asked.

"I don't know much about graves," she answered; "but it seems a good depth."

Zing came over and looked in, his ears pricked forward, his stump rigid. The man tossed the shovel out and climbed after. He stood looking down into the excavation he had made. He had kept in mind that she was a big woman, she that was soon to lie here in this hole in the black soil. He rubbed his hands and thought a minute. "I'll be back presently," he said, and went back to the camp. When he returned he had an axe in his hand. She looked at him curiously and wondered what he was going to do next. She thought it not worth while to make the effort of asking. She saw him carefully appraising some small fir-trees that stood near. Then he began cutting down one. She saw him glance up its shaft, straight as an arrow, and then with long swift strokes he began to chop. In a few minutes it fell crashing into the brush just beyond the grave. Carefully he trimmed the limbs, and this done with sure quick slashes he divided them into eight-foot lengths. Still she did not understand what he was doing. At last she asked in a low voice—

"What are you going to do with those logs?" He looked at her meditatively. She was very pretty, he thought, though inexpressibly forlorn and helpless.

"I'm going to line the grave, you know," he said at last. Still she did not seem to understand.

"Line the grave?" she said. "Do they always line graves?" and she looked at him with an inquiring glance.

"Well, you see, there are usually coffins. But we haven't anything to make a coffin out of here, and we don't want an old grizzly to come poking around here and——" but he stopped short as he saw the look of horror on her face. He turned away and cursed himself for being a fool. It wasn't necessary to be so explicit, he thought.

"An old grizzly," she murmured and stopped. She clasped her hands tightly together until they grew white from the pressure. Then she got up and said—

"I'll go back and sit with her;" and he heard her moving off through the brush. In a few minutes she returned and stood looking at him with her face full of horror.

"I cannot sit there; it is too terrible," she whispered.

"Was anything wrong?" he asked quickly, his mind running over the contingencies. He could think of nothing.

She dropped down on the log and looked at him wide eyed. At last she said—

"I went back thinking I'd try and do something for her. Wash her face, or straighten out her clothes or something. It seems so still and dreadful in there with just silence inside and the birds and the sunshine and the river all so peaceful outside. I hated to touch the blanket. At last I did. As soon as I put my hand on it, there was a great buzzing, and when I lifted the corner, her face was covered with flies, oh, hundreds and hundreds of them." She paused for a moment and then went on. "Oh, it is all too terrible. She looks awful. I can't describe it to you;" and her eyes wandered off through the brush. Then she came over and looked into the hole.

"How much longer will it take?" she asked.

"An hour or two, I'm afraid," he replied, "but you sit here and talk with me and when it's finished you let me fix her up. I guess you are not much used to this kind of thing;" and without looking at her again he threw himself into the task of lining the grave. He worked quickly and accurately with an axe. In another hour he had finished. On the bottom were five large logs over which he strewed balsam brush. The sides were built up to the level of the ground with three-inch pieces, two on each side, with

two cross-pieces let in above after being carefully notched, just as one builds a log cabin. At last his task was finished save to cut some pieces to go over the top. This he did with great care. Then he cut more brush and stood the fir boughs along the sides of the grave so that finally his hole was lined with green.

All this time Miss Dick sat watching him. Her mind seemed quite numb. Death before had always been to her intangible and far away. When people she had known had died it had been entirely different. She had never seriously considered all the dreadful details which are left to the undertaker. Now she had been called upon to face it all in its very worst aspects. In spite of her piled-up horrors, she was not thinking of herself. For the first time in her life, her mind was on another, and that other, one for whom nothing more could be done,—her friend up yonder in the tent.

Having finished the grave Smith stuck the axe in a neighbouring tree. Miss Dick looked at him.

"Now what?" she asked.

"We will go up to the tent," he said, and slowly they walked back past the camp fire, now burned to ashes. When they reached the tent he paused and said very kindly—

"Perhaps you had better wait outside for a bit."

"I think I ought to help too, don't you?" she said, her lip trembling a little, and then added in a low voice, "It's all I can do now. I'm sure I've been useless enough ever since she has been sick."

He looked at her and wondered if it could be possible that this was the same girl who only two nights before had spoken to him so sharply by the campfire. In her pathos and misery she had been very winning.

"You cannot help just now," he said gently, and then an idea striking him, he added, "I'll tell you what you can do. Two hundred yards below here on the river bank there is a little flat. There's some red flowers growing there. Suppose you go down and gather a little bunch of them. You know we should have some little touch like that. It will not make it all seem quite so bad, will it?"

She looked at him out of her grey eyes. She knew that he was sending her away to spare her feelings, and for that she felt grateful.

"I think a woman ought to do these last touches," she said, "but I'm so hopelessly incompetent and weak and useless. I never realized it before. I'll do as you say;" and without a word she turned toward the river.

"Take the dog," he called after her; "he'll be company for you." Zing, at a look from his

master, trotted meekly after the girl. He in his doggy way wanted to be useful too.

When the two had gone Smith entered the tent. He hesitated a moment before he touched the figure on the bed. In his way he was as sensitive as the girl, but he had the strength and determination of a man's will, which forced him to do what he had to do. He flicked back the covering and with his handkerchief brushed off the flies which rose in a buzzy swarm from the face, now cold and white. The mouth was half open, and a few belated flies came humming out of it, and flew up on to the canvas. The eyes half open stared dully at the tent above. He tried to close them, but the lids stuck to the eyeballs. The expression of them was dreadful. He went out and heated some water over the fire and then with a cloth moistened the eyelids, but still they clung. The flesh of them was repulsively cold. Already the thin film of death glazed the eyeballs. He stepped back, not seeing how to remedy the case. The cold, intellectual face of the dead woman looked up at him, rigid and uncomplaining. Next, he tried to close the mouth, but this too proved impossible, as already the jaws were set. He had not realized the swiftness with which death seizes upon its own with its cold and stiff embrace. The open

mouth with the lips shrunk back from the large white teeth gave a dreadful expression to the corpse. He threw off the blanket and putting his arm under the shoulders, raised the body on the cot. It was quite rigid and stood out in his arms as straight and inflexible as a waxen image. The hair of the dead woman was black, turning grey. It was in confusion. He did not know how to arrange it. He glanced around the tent. On the top of a box he caught sight of a woollen cap such as men wear in cold weather. He took this and with his hands pulled it over the cold head and then pushed the loose hair up under it. He lowered the body back on to the cot.

He felt very definitely that he was not making a success of his task.

He walked to the door of the tent and took a few long deep breaths of air redolent of fir and pine steeped in summer sunshine. Then he came back and with his handkerchief whisked the flies away from the face. He wondered what he could do to make the dead woman look less dreadful. It was terrible that the last glimpse the girl should have of her friend should be one so filled with horror. Still it seemed unavoidable. He cursed himself for not having closed the eyes and mouth sooner. At last he placed the big luxurious blanket on the ground and laid the body in the centre of

it. The pillow that had been on her cot he placed under her head. Next he folded the blanket over the body and threw the end up over her feet just as he would have wrapped a sleeper up in a sleeping bag. Then with a big needle and some buckskin thongs he sewed the body in the blankets, leaving only the head and shoulders exposed. The long blanket extended a foot beyond the head, and could be folded over the face when the time for burial came. He wiped the face very carefully with the cloth. Then he buttoned the dress up to the neck. In one of the open boxes was a long white silk scarf. His eye fell on it. He raised the head carefully and wrapped it around the neck, so that it crossed at the throat and lay in milk white folds on the breast outside the blanket. The effect was better, he told himself. Then he went out again and got his axe and cut some brush. Around her head he laid some boughs. It made the setting seem less sordid, he thought, as he looked at the body. Just then he heard steps outside. It was Miss Dick coming back. In her hands she held a bunch of red flowers.

"I have finished," he said. "Go in now if you like. I'll wait down by the campfire. Call me when you are ready;" and he walked away slowly.

The girl stood a moment and then stepped inside the tent.

Nearly a half hour passed before she called him. He entered the tent. The red flowers lay on the breast of the dead woman. Otherwise the body was as he left it. For several minutes the two, the trapper and the delicately bred girl, stood motionless. The girl's face was white and rigid, while her hands kept closing and unclosing nervously. The man's face was stern and sad. After a moment's silence the girl turned away abruptly and with a little catch in her voice said, "I'll wait for you by the grave," and left him.

When she was gone he knelt over the body to fold the blanket over her face before he sewed it in place. For a moment he gazed sadly at her.

"What a dreadful thing," he thought, "that I, a total stranger, should be the last to look on you, poor woman." Then with a quick movement he turned back the blanket and with swift stitches fastened it over the head. Then he stooped and lifted the body in his arms, and with it walked to the grave.

Miss Dick rose from the stump where she had been sitting when she heard him staggering through the brush with his burden, for the dead woman had been a heavy one. Zing ran to meet him and whimpered as he smelt the body through the blanket. He was a very sensitive

dog. Smith laid the body on the ground and then stepped down into the grave. He slipped his arms under the shoulders and lifted it down into the hole in an upright position. Miss Dick watched him as though held by every movement that he made. With legs wide apart he stood in the grave and gently slipped the corpse into a reclining position in its final resting-place. With his hand he smoothed out the blanket very carefully, and then climbed out of the grave. Then he gently laid the logs he had cut above the body. Zing walked over and looked in. The girl stood as one in a dream, gazing into the crude burial-place.

Smith touched her arm gently.

"Is there anything more?" he asked in a low voice.

Two days before she would have resented the touch; now she hardly noticed it as she asked him appealingly—

"Shouldn't we have some sort of service?"

"Yes, I suppose so," he said; "but I am afraid I don't know any. Do you?"

She looked past him toward the river. At last she said—

"I'm not a very good girl or a very deep one. I don't know much about religion. I'm ashamed to think how little I do know."

Smith said nothing. At last she went on—

"I know the Lord's Prayer! Do you?" and she looked at him sadly.

"Yes, I know that," he said. She glanced at him and at last said, "Shall we repeat it together? It seems to be all we can do?"

Smith took off his hat and he in his deep low tones, and she with her clear girlish voice, slowly repeated the words of the prayer together. Then for a moment they stood looking at each other.

"You had better go back and wait in the camp," he said.

"No, I'll stay with you," she replied. She turned away and leaned her head against a great fir-tree. But she did not cry as she had the night before. She only stood quiet and impassive, as she heard him shovelling in the dirt. At last the sounds of falling earth ceased, but she could still hear him smoothing the surface with the shovel. She turned around.

The grave was filled.

Together they walked slowly back to the camp.

CHAPTER VIII

AFTER the simple funeral Smith prepared something for them to eat. Neither spoke until the meal was finished. Then he said—

"You don't mind if I smoke, do you?" She shook her head. He lighted his pipe and for a little time stood gazing into the fire. At last he asked, "Who was she?" and glanced inquiringly at the small figure sitting opposite him. Would he ever get used, he wondered, to seeing this immaculate small person in this rugged wilderness? She seemed so utterly out of place in all this primitive vastness. She looked up at him with a little surprised expression as she answered—

"Why, how strange it sounds for you to ask that! But of course you do not know." She paused and just a shade of her old expression crossed her face as she went on: "I do not see that her name makes much difference, for of course you never heard of her. However, since you ask, it was Isabel Weston."

The man whistled gently through his teeth and then inquired incredulously, "Not the English novelist?"

"Why yes," she said in evident amazement. "How in the world did you know of her."

"I suppose because I have read all her books," he said simply. As she did not reply for a minute or two he glanced up at her. Her eyes were fixed on him with a puzzled expression.

"Read all her books? You? Why that is most astonishing. I didn't suppose that men like you ever——" and she stopped with a little embarrassment, and turned away from his blue eyes, which were fixed on her face.

"Go ahead," he said in a rather amused voice, "finish your sentence. You were about to say that you didn't suppose men of my class ever read anything. Well, sometimes we do, you know. As a matter of fact, I have two of Miss Weston's books, *The Thorn Rose* and a volume of her early essays, cached in an old stump not a hundred miles from here."

Miss Dick made no reply, but viewed him with an expression of bewilderment. Her lips were half open, and he thought he had never seen such white and perfect teeth in his life. She was very pretty, he found himself thinking, very pretty indeed. How incredible that such a girl should be here at all, and more wonderful

still that they should be alone together hundreds of miles from any one, they two, who until a few hours ago had never seen or heard of each other.

"Do you mind telling me how you happened to be here, you two?" he asked at last.

In the back of her mind she had planned to be very dignified with this man and to get their relationship back to that of mistress and employee. She realized that she was slipping from her position of aloofness with startling rapidity. Here they were talking just as though they were on the same footing. But the man seemed perfectly at ease and somehow not at all like an inferior, and while she was thinking how she might retain her dignity she actually found herself answering his question quite naturally.

"I suppose it does seem strange to find two women so far away. But it came about perfectly naturally. I knew Miss Weston four years ago in England. When father was there putting through a big bond issue I spent a month on her place in the South of England. We became very well acquainted and whenever she came to New York she always stopped with us, and when we were abroad, I stopped with her. Two summers ago we toured the continent together. A year later we made a camping trip

together in Eastern Canada. That's where poor Bill the canoeman came from. She was much impressed with the wildness of it, though it was comparatively tame back there; nothing like this dreadful place." She waved her hand vaguely to indicate the wilderness that lay about her, then went on—

"I was abroad last February getting some frocks in Paris, and she came over and joined me. She was full of a story that the trip of a year ago had suggested to her. *Simple Things*, she was going to call it, I believe. She wanted to make a really rough trip, she said, to get the local colour. She had this trip all planned out, and I agreed to come along. Father objected bitterly, but gave in at last." She paused and looked reflectively into the fire and said half to herself, "Poor Dad, he always does. I suppose he cannot help himself, as I never do." Then she stopped and looked at the man. Had he been smiling, she would never have forgiven him. But he wasn't, at least not on the surface. On the contrary he was knocking the ashes out of his pipe on the heel of his boot. His face was perfectly non-committal.

"Yes," he interjected quietly, "you were saying Miss Weston wanted colour for a new book;" and still without glancing at her he began carefully cleaning the stem of his pipe with a

blade of grass. She could not help feeling that he was a somewhat satisfactory man.

"Well," she went on after a moment's pause, "there isn't much more to tell. We picked up an outfit and took the few things that we could not do without, and started."

Smith said nothing, but he thought of the tent containing the "few things they could not do without," and he experienced a great wonderment at what this kind of a woman had to have for her comfort when she was at home.

Miss Dick continued:—

"We got on very well to the flat at the head of the Big River, when Miss Weston was taken ill. Before that she had made all the arrangements with the men. When she was lying in her tent I, of course, gave all the directions. It was forty days back by trail, at least, and the Indian said we could make it down the river in ten, and——" but she suddenly remembered that herein had been the cause of all the disagreement between herself and this big blue-eyed man, who, having cleaned his pipe, was in the very act of refilling it. He guessed why she had stopped so abruptly, and when she stood up he made no comment. The girl walked over toward camp and then back to where he still sat. He stood up. The sight of the tent brought her back to the horrors of the past two days.

"When can we leave here?" she asked in a low voice. "I don't think I can possibly spend another night in that place. It would be too terrible."

His voice was very gentle as he said, "No, Miss Dick, it's pretty sad here, and we might pack up and make a little piece up the river this afternoon. There's a little moon and we can travel late, and the farther we get from here the better I shall like it."

He stopped. She was looking at him very severely.

"Are you still going to insist on dragging me up the river?" she asked with great dignity.

He stared at the ground in much embarrassment. He would have given a good deal to have pleased her just now, for he felt that if he gave in she might be a very nice kind of girl to have around. Then he looked her straight in the eye as he answered firmly, "I'm afraid I must insist. You know, I understand this country pretty well."

She flashed one reproachful look at him as she said in a low voice, "I should have thought after all I've been through these last two days you might have done this to please me." And there was an appeal in her eyes that made her almost irresistible. He did not wonder that poor "old Dad" always gave in. He felt like doing it himself, but once his mind was made

up he was not easily moved. So he only shook his head. She flushed with mortification. It seemed the last humiliation to appeal to one's own employee and be refused, for her illogical girl's mind still persisted in clinging to this relationship.

"I think you are very mean," was all she said, as she disappeared in her tent. After a few minutes the man walked slowly over and without entering, he called "Miss Dick."

"What do you want?" came the sulky reply.

"Will you please step down to the river a moment, I want to show you something." With great dignity she walked down to the river's edge with him.

"Well, what do you want to show me?" she asked somewhat curtly.

He made no comment, but pointed to his small dugout canoe.

"Well, what of it?" she asked crossly, "I see it's a canoe."

"In packing up your dunnage," he said thoughtfully, "please remember the size of this boat. She was intended for only one man you know. Two can go in it if they sit very quietly. There isn't room for much else, is there?" and he looked at the girl meditatively. A light of intense annoyance passed over her face.

"Why, I cannot begin to get my things in

that. Where can I put my boxes? " she said, turning on him just as though it was his fault.

"You cannot take them with you at all," he replied calmly.

"Cannot take them at all? " she queried, as if he had made some perfectly absurd assertion. "Why, how can I get along without my things? It is impossible; and beside my boxes there's the camp furniture and oh, piles of other stuff. What am I going to do about that? " and she looked at him as though it were his duty to supply the answer.

"It's not my fault, Miss Dick," he said penitently, "so do not look so angrily at me. You see the size of the canoe. Well, you will have to leave your boxes, and your furniture too, for that matter." Her big round eyes were fixed on him in utter amazement.

"Leave my camp-bed? " she echoed. "Why, you must be mad. Why, where would I sleep nights? " She asked this just as though it were a clinching question and must settle him once and for all. He made no definite reply, but began to gather up his own few effects.

"Well? " she queried.

He turned to her and said very quietly, but with great firmness, "You have seen our only means of transport. Now please pack up. Take only what is absolutely essential. We

will take all we can with safety. What we cannot get on we shall have to leave, and I am sorry if it is going to inconvenience you. But really, you know, it is not my fault."

Without a word she left him. In the meantime he took down the canoemen's tent and wrapping it carefully around their belongings, he made it into a great pack and hoisted it up in a tree. A few of their things such as an extra axe and the shovel he put in his canoe. He was just finishing this when Miss Dick called him. He went up to the tent. He thought he had never seen such confusion.

"It is perfectly impossible to get my clothes into one box," she said in evident exasperation. "You must see that for yourself, Smith."

Smith looked around. He was much embarrassed. The tent was strewn with feminine apparel; all kinds of white things that he knew nothing whatever about. The girl blushed as she caught his eye, wandering about the confusion. "I think you're just horrid," she said, with a little stamp of her foot. As a matter of fact she had forgotten all about the clothing that was strewn about. Her mind was all on persuading him to take two boxes instead of one. He sighed heavily, seeing that he was in for a hard time. She was an attractive girl, he thought, but very difficult to reason with.

He went out, and in a few minutes came back with a large sack he had found in his outfit. She looked at him inquiringly.

"What's that for?" she asked suspiciously.

He was much distressed and wished it was to-morrow or two weeks hence. But it wasn't. All this had to be gone through with, and he must be patient, if he could.

"You may take, Miss Dick, just what you can pack in this sack. No more," he said with authority.

"Not even one box?" she asked.

"No," he said, "not one. It is impossible."

She sat down on her cot and looked gloomily about her. Some sort of a silk wrapper effect was lying on the ground, and under the edge of the cot were two dainty red slippers trimmed with fur. He could not understand how she could ever have brought all this stuff, much less how she thought it possible to get it out.

"You see," he added, "besides ourselves and Zing, there's the camp outfit, tents and so on, and the grub pile. Food and shelter you know are more important than—well, all this tinkle tankle," and he waved his arm at the disordered litter.

"Don't I get my bed either?" she asked in a sad little voice.

"No bed," he replied with conviction.

"Where am I going to sleep then?" she asked gloomily, looking miserably at her elaborate belongings.

"Now don't worry about that," he said kindly; "please trust me. You will be surprised at how comfortable I can make you out here in the mountains. Now listen, please," and in a rough way he sketched out the few things that she would absolutely have to have. "One dress, if it is as stout as that one looks will last you out," he told her. "Take two pairs of boots and enough understuff to keep you warm." She tinged just a little in colour as he sketched out what she would need, but she listened to it all in perfect meekness. He left her to prepare her things on the new scale he had suggested, and going back slipped the canoe into the water. Finally she called to him. He went up to the tent. She came outside. For the first time since he had seen her she had on a hat. A big-brimmed brown hat made out of some stiff kind of velvety stuff. Two great red wings swept back from the front. It was a beautiful hat. He frowned a little as he looked at it.

"Is that the only hat you have?" he asked.

"No," she said, "but it's my best. Now please don't object to that. It isn't going to swamp your old canoe." On her arm she had a long brown overcoat. It was made of some soft

blankety woolly stuff. "My coat," she said in mock introduction, "don't you like it?"

He sighed.

"Yes," he said, "it looks warm, but I don't think it will shed water. Have you a raincoat?"

"I did have," she said casually, "but it fell in the fire the first week out and I threw it away. Miss Weston lost hers too." She paused, and then went on: "But it really doesn't matter; I don't mind the rain hardly at all," and she walked slowly down to the canoe. Inside he found a sack crammed tightly. He carried it down to the river. She was sitting on the log by the canoe, very carefully tying a filmy brown veil around her hat. In her mouth were two hat-pins. He stood gazing at her in perfect wonder. He never could get used to seeing her about, and there was no use trying.

He went back and struck the big tent and packed up the odds and ends that were left and threw the tent around them. The girl had come back and sadly watched his final preparations. At last he was finished, and turned to go. The girl stood disconsolately looking into the burned-out embers of the camp-fire.

"What a dreadful place this has been!" she said in a low voice; "it seems as though I had spent half my life here." She looked at the man. For a moment their eyes met. She turned

away, and then, without glancing at him, she said in a low voice, "You've been very kind, Smith; I'm sorry if I was disagreeable the other night;" and she walked slowly toward the canoe.

It was just five o'clock when they pushed off into the stream, and the man standing in the stern poled the craft slowly up the river and out of sight around the bend.

CHAPTER IX

IT was after eight o'clock that night when Smith ran the canoe into an eddy in the Big River and with a final heave on his long pole shoved the nose upon the sandy beach. The sun had gone down behind the mountains and the wonderful afterglow lay with all its peace and beauty on the still surface of the river. The moment the bow touched, Zing jumped ashore and went whirling and spinning up the beach. Behind the little muddy flat the jungle crowded in close to a cut-bank, where the river in high water had swept in close and eaten away a channel under the very toe of a great spruce that leaned out at a perilous angle over the stream. Only its great roots kept it from falling in. All the way up the river, Miss Dick, who had sat with her back to the man, facing the bow, had never spoken. When they had finally started, and the camp with its dismal grave was left behind them, she felt very lonely and miserable. The dead woman had been what the world calls a

strong character. Miss Dick had been fond of her, but had never felt that close affection which some women are able to inspire. But now that she was gone forever the girl recalled a thousand acts of kindness and little attentions.

Looking back she now realized that the older woman had always taken care of her as though she had been a child, and that in all the decisions of the trail it had been she who with firm and authoritative manner had given the orders. Miss Dick had been brought up to consider herself an important factor in the world, but she was just beginning to see that she really had never made any vital decisions in any of the emergencies, and that whenever there had been a conflict of wills between herself and the older woman, the latter in some subtle way had always prevailed. Now she was gone, and the girl felt that she was absolutely helpless in her predicament. What did she know of this man who stood in the stern of the canoe, silently driving the frail craft up the stream? When she had been backed by the presence of the two canoemen and the strong character of the dead woman she had felt herself more than able to ride over this stranger who had come into their camp two nights before. Now everything seemed different, and in a vague way she felt that her confidence in herself

and in the immediate future had completely evaporated.

As the minutes slipped past and the sun set and darkness began slowly to gather in the East, she felt an increasing horror creeping over her. She began to have a vague fear of the man, and in a half-defined way she was afraid of the coming of the night when something told her that the face of the dead woman would steal between her and sleep. The thought of that cold impassive mask with the flies buzzing and humming about it when she had raised the blanket, kept coming back to her again and again. She felt tired and very weak, and began to wonder about religion and God. For the first time in her life she realized that she had never thought deeply about anything. The river, with its slow-flowing stream, and the great mountains that loomed rugged and impassive on both sides of the valley seemed to her to be the veritable walls of a prison. Would she ever get out of this awful place? she wondered; then her mind went back to her friend. Could it be possible that she was really dead? What did it mean to be dead? and her mind, unused to any sustained logical effort, drifted off into a maze of uncertainties, leaving an impression on her of having suddenly discovered a dreadful phenomenon just at her elbow, one that had

always been there, but one of which she had never even thought. Some day, to-morrow, perhaps, she too might be dead, and this strange man might be brushing flies off of her, just as he had from the face of her friend. Then she thought of the woman, and for a while she forgot self in the contemplation of the one that was dead; and if Smith had seen her face he would have noticed from time to time the tears that dropped on the wonderful blanket coat that lay in her lap. He did see her take one of those ridiculous little ten-inch bits of linen from her pocket and blow her nose. He knew that she was crying, and he liked her the better for it. His heart expanded within his great forty-inch chest, and he swore a little oath to himself that he would take care of this girl during these next weeks as though she were his own sister. Still he had said nothing, but with long and steady heaves had kept the boat sliding ever on and up the river. All this time the girl was filled with a growing fear of the man. She began to dread the time when they should camp, and more and more did she fear the coming of the blackness.

She realized that she was afraid of the dark. She had never been put to the test before. Always a maid or some one slept in the next room with a door ajar to come instantly if she called in

the night. When at last the canoe bumped on the beach she was in a veritable panic.

Smith stepped out into the water and pulled the boat, girl and all up on to the flat. Then he came to her. Involuntarily she shrunk back.

"Why, what's the matter?" he asked kindly. How could he in his stupid man's mind have imagined all these puzzling thoughts that for the last three hours had been germinating in the girl's head?

She looked up at him in a scared kind of way, but made no effort to get up. He saw that she was in a strange state of mind, and felt sorry for her.

"We must camp here, you know," he said gently; "in another few hours it will be too dark to travel on the river, and I want to get your tent up and make you comfortable for the night. Can't I help you out?" and he held out his hand to her.

She put her small brown one in it, and he raised her to her feet. His voice reassured her. He looked very good and kind, she thought, in spite of his awful clothes and unshaven face, and his voice too had a nice low note that was refined and delicate.

"I don't see any place to camp," she said miserably, as she looked around the muddy flat. "I think this is an awful place. Must

I sleep on this mud, and without my little bed too ? " she asked pathetically.

" An hour from now," he said reassuringly, " you will feel much better. Come this way ; " and with his hand he helped her up the little bank where there was a faint trail running off into the woods. She felt her fright return.

" Where are you taking me ? " she asked in a tremulous voice, but before he answered she saw back among the trees a small clearing hewn out of the heart of the jungle. In the centre had been an old camp fire, while under one of the big trees was a pile of wood ready cut.

" One of my old camps," he said easily. " Now you just sit down on that log, and I'll show you how a camp should be made. You had better slip on that nice fuzzy coat of yours ; it's getting chilly." He talked to her in the kindly persuasive way that one uses to a child, and she began to feel that perhaps he was to be trusted, after all.

In two minutes he had a fire roaring, and in a jiffy the smell of frying bacon and boiling coffee filled the air. She sat on the log, her small feet stretched towards the fire. She had taken off the big brown hat and held it in her lap, while the great hatpins she stuck into the bark of the log. Her colour was coming back a little ; she had been very pale when she landed ; the

light from the fire brought out all the tints beneath the skin. With wondering eyes she watched her companion move rapidly about the camp. While the water was boiling he was busy with his axe. Small trees he lopped down with a single stroke, and then holding them with one hand he trimmed the branches with his axe, and with a quick movement cut off the top. In fifteen minutes the tent was up, pegged down, and its flaps thrown wide open, making the whole interior dance and jump with the pink light of the fire. It was his own small tent. He had thought the other too big. For himself he had a "fly" he could throw up in case of bad weather. He had the tent standing cozily before the fire by the time the water boiled. In twenty minutes there was something to eat.

"Dinner is served, Madam," he said with feigned formality. "Where shall it be?"

"Right here please, Smith," she said in a very meek voice. Then she added without looking at him. "Won't you have yours with me?"

Smith, who was stooping over the frying-pan, said nothing, but his heart beat a few times in a very pleasant way, and he felt the blood flowing warm and soothingly all over his body. All he said was—

"Yes, I'd be glad to," and then added. "Will

you have milk or evaporated cream for your coffee? I see we have both in your very well selected grub pile." He sat down beside her on the log. He was very hungry. She had no appetite, but she picked daintily at the food on her plate. At last she took up in her fingers a bit of bacon and nibbled it. Out of the corner of her eye she glanced at the man. She felt reassured. She wasn't afraid of him at all now.

While they were eating, Zing sat in front of the girl, his stump stirring uneasily in the dirt. He was a polite dog and never climbed on one unless invited. She gave him a small piece of bacon, which he took daintily, his head on one side. Then he resumed his vigilant attitude, suggesting that another small bit would be appreciated. While Miss Dick fed the dog Smith went to make her bed. She glanced up inquiringly as he got up.

"I am going to fix your bed," he said in answer to her look; "you must be very tired?"

"Yes, I am almost dead," she replied; "but somehow I don't feel as though I should ever sleep again. My mind is so full of the horrors of the last two days;" and she stroked Zing's head as she stared absently into the fire.

Smith went off into the wood, and in a few minutes Miss Dick heard the decisive blows of his axe. When he came back he was dragging

an armful of small fir-trees. He trimmed the trunks, holding his axe close to the head, the little branches falling in avalanches around his feet as the sharp blade cut them from the trunk. The stems when bared he laid lengthwise in the tent, and then cut crosspieces, notching them so that they fitted neatly over the longer ones. Two more, longer, trunks were laid above, and another two crosspieces were let in. Stakes driven in at the corners held this frame rigid and immovable in the centre of the tent. Then he selected carefully some of the larger branches that he had trimmed off and with a sweeping movement placed them in the bottom of his frame. Soon the bottom was covered and he went for more. When the whole was well filled he knelt beside it and very carefully pressed it all down until the two feet of boughs were well packed. After that he picked up a canvas cover and disappeared to the edge of the clearing. When he returned he carried a great bulging bundle of pine sprays slung over his shoulders like a Santa Claus pack. These he dumped in the tent, and placed them one by one, beginning at the head and working down toward the foot of the bed. When this was covered six inches deep, he began at the sides and placed in other layers until at last the rustic frame work overflowed with the balsam-scented tops.

Miss Dick watched his every movement but said nothing. She was thinking that it looked very comfortable and wondered why Bill or the other packers had never made this kind of a couch, and then remembered her camp cot, which had seemed so necessary. As she thought of it, she recalled the wry faces the packers back in the settlement had made when they were given the ingenious collapsible camp furniture to pack on the horses. Then she wondered if the other men of the mountains were as clever in making beds in the wilderness. This man seemed very competent in everything that he did, she thought, as she watched him unrolling her blankets and bedding. He was evidently not satisfied, for he went to his own pack and for a long time stood looking at it. Then he glanced up at the sky. The stars were shining brightly. He took out his canvas fly. This he stretched over the frame leaving about six feet lapping over at the bottom and two on each side. On this he carefully stretched her blankets and at the head he placed a small silk-covered down pillow which he found in the bedding. He studied it carefully in the firelight. Like everything else she had it was daintily perfect: a little soiled now to be sure, but in the corner a tiny monogram was finely embroidered.

When all was done he came back to the fire.

She was still sitting on the log. Zing had curled up at her feet, his head on his paws, and with his eyes half closed he was watching the flicker of the flames. Smith cut some more wood, and then rolled a great fragment of a log up toward the fire. He did not offer any comment. Out of his pack he took one of his two blankets and stretched it over the log and toward the fire.

"I am going down to the river for water," he explained as he picked up two pails. "You will find it more comfortable sitting over here on the blanket. You can lean your back against the log, you know." He paused and then added, "Kind of like an easy chair;" and he walked away through the brush.

Zing sat up suddenly and looked after his master. The girl patted him and he lay down again. For several minutes she studied the place the man had prepared for her. Then she glanced at a small watch on her wrist. It was nearly midnight. She looked at the tent. It was very alluring, but she felt she could not sleep. Her back was very tired. She had been sitting rigid in the canoe for hours; down by the river, she could hear Smith whistling. Then she got up and walked around to where the blanket was stretched and sat down. She leaned her back against the log and extended her feet toward the fire. She felt very comfortable. Several

times she thought of going to the bed of boughs in the tent, but each time she dreaded the being alone, and the consciousness of seeing the vision of her dead friend's face weighed on her. That cold white visage with the flies buzzing and humming on it was always the picture that she could see when she closed her eyes. She wondered if time would ever make her forget it. Still she was very tired. She unlaced her boots and took them off and stretched her toes toward the embers, as one sees a dog extend his paws when he yawns. When she heard Smith coming back, she told herself, she would slip on her boots again. She stared into the fire. It made her very sleepy. She wondered what Smith was doing down by the river. She could still hear him whistling.

As a matter of fact he was sitting on a rock watching the Big River flowing steadily by in the starlight. The surface of the water was so still that he could see the little dabs of silver where the reflection of the stars looked back at him. Over his shoulder he could catch the flash of the camp fire and the white outline of the tent with its flaps hospitably thrown back. The girl, he thought, would rather be by herself just now. He suspected that his presence might annoy her and yet in a subtle way he felt that if she were entirely alone she might feel frightened.

That was why he whistled. After all he had quite a lot of sense for a man who knew nothing of women and who for the past years had been almost entirely alone save for his horses and the dog.

He hoped vaguely that he and the girl might become friends. He wondered who she was. She had not told him her last name. He would not ask her, he thought. If she cared to tell him she would, and if she did not it would offend her to be quizzed. He had never thought much about his looks in the mountains, but now he began to think of his disreputable clothes. They were very ragged and dirty. Still he was clean. and that was more than could be said of most men who led his life. He passed his hand over his face and felt the scraggly, untrimmed beard. He had no mirror here, but he knew he must look unkempt. In his cache on the flat near the head of the Big River he had a razor. He would shave when he got there, he told himself. He had also a pair of unused khaki trousers. He always kept one pair so that when he came into the settlements he might not look too disreputable. He would try to improve his appearance when he got to that cache, he kept thinking to himself. He looked down at his clothing. It was dark, but he could see the rents torn in his trousers. They were made the morning the

men were drowned in the rapids. Had he been alone he would have mended them long before this, but events had moved so rapidly that he had not thought of them since. No wonder the girl thought he belonged to the servant class. He felt himself trying to justify her. He wanted to believe that she was right in saying and doing all that she had done. At last he took out his watch. He could not see it in the dark. He struck a match. Incredible? It was nearly one o'clock in the morning. He glanced back toward the camp. The fire was burning very low. He picked up his pails and walked back to the little clearing.

Zing heard him, and getting up stretched himself and came slowly toward him. The little tail jerked feebly a few times. The dog was very sleepy. Smith set the pails down by the fire and looked at the girl. She was asleep. She had slipped down on the blanket and her face was pillowed in her arms. By the log were her shoes. Two small feet were stretched toward the fire. For many minutes the man stood looking at her. It is useless to try and analyse his thoughts. He could not have done so himself. The least important of them was that she was the prettiest girl he had ever met. Still, he had seen few for seven years. He sat down on the log opposite the sleeping girl. Her mouth

was open just a little and her breast rose and fell gently as she breathed. Her hair had loosened on one side and a dozen strands strayed over her cheek that shone soft and pink in the firelight.

It was getting cold. The man felt it and held his hands extended over the embers. A log fell and one of the ends took fire anew and began to burn brightly. He thought it would have awakened her. It did not. She must be very tired, he reflected. She had not slept at all the night before. He wished she would wake up and go in the tent. It would be very much colder before daylight. She might catch cold if she lay here all night on the cold hard damp ground. He would wake her up, he said to himself.

Still he did not move from his position. She was sleeping so sweetly that it seemed a crime to disturb her. An idea crossed his mind. Could he put her in the tent without awakening her? He wished he had not thought of it. Suppose she should wake before he could place her on the bed of boughs? He felt himself grow warm with embarrassment. She would never forgive him for touching her. No, it would be better for her to stay where she was. Again came the idea that she might take cold and develop some serious sickness. He would wake her up. But still he did not move. In all his experience

he could not remember having vacillated to such an extent. Suddenly his mind was made up. He would carry her into the tent just as she was. He thought he could do it without arousing her. He stepped over softly to where she lay.

Very gently he slid his arms under her and moving with the utmost caution he slowly lifted her from the ground. He was surprised at the lightness of the burden. He had been prepared for something heavy. Just why he did not know. To his iron muscles, trained to long and arduous exertion, she seemed light as a feather. Her head rested on his arm. After he had raised her from the blanket he stood motionless for a few seconds. He had never held a woman in his arms in his life. He dared not look at her face lest she should awake. He felt that if she did he would drop her and take refuge in the jungle. He never remembered experiencing such nervousness. She breathed steadily and regularly. He could almost feel her warm breath on his cheek. He moved toward the tent, advancing a step at a time, just as he did when he stalked the game of the mountains. He bent his head as he entered. One of the canvas flaps caught on him and fell rustling.

He stopped dead still. Surely that would waken her. He felt hot all over. She did not

move. Inch by inch he lowered her to the bed. Quietly and with the greatest caution he laid her down. Her head rested on the little soft pillow. She turned slightly, and he thought she was going to wake. He stepped back to the shadow. Anyway she was not in his arms. The worst moment was passed.

A long sigh escaped her lips, and then the heavy breathing was resumed.

For a minute he stood looking at her. The fire was almost out, but he could faintly discern the outline of her face. As she did not wake he bent down and slowly, gently, drew the blankets over her. Then with the same caution he pulled the canvas fly up over the blankets. It came just to her chin. Inch by inch, and with the greatest care he tucked it carefully about her. Then he tip-toed out of the tent and gently let fall the other flap. He walked back to the fire. Then he took out his handkerchief and very slowly removed the perspiration from his forehead. He drew a long breath.

"Zing," he said to the dog, who sat sleepily watching him, "it was like stalking an old ram on the side of a mountain. But we got away with it all right, didn't we, old boy?"

The dog must have acquiesced, for he jerked his stump of a tail with great vigour.

CHAPTER X

WHEN Miss Dick woke the sun was shining brightly. Her first impression was one of strangeness. She looked across the tent. There was no second cot there. For a moment she stared about dazedly, for she was half asleep. Then it suddenly came back to her—the tragedy of the past days, the death of her friend, and the making of the camp the night before.

She did not understand being in the tent. She stirred on her bed of boughs. It was very soft. She took a long breath. The air was redolent of pine. She listened. All was still save the gentle ripple of the river, which was barely audible, and the murmur of the forest around her. The gentle rub of a limb against the canvas top made a faint scratching sound. She tried to remember how she had gotten into the tent. She could recall sitting by the fire and taking off her boots. In an indistinct way she remembered being very tired. She must have come in here and fallen asleep. She sat up in her blankets. The canvas cover was neatly tucked in all around her. The weight of her

body had packed down the boughs and she was like a child in a crib. Her hair was dishevelled and falling about her shoulders. She could not recollect having braided it at all the night before. She sat cross-legged in her nest of pine-needles with the aura of her hair floating about her. For a long time she pondered as to how she had come there. Finally she decided that she must have walked, but had been too exhausted to be conscious of her own efforts. She looked at the canvas covering. This puzzled her. She wondered where Smith was. Slowly she crawled out of her blankets. It had been a marvellous bed, she told herself, and very soft. She had slept well, and she felt wonderfully refreshed. It was very warm and nice in the tent. She thought it must be quite late as the sun seemed well on his day's journey. She looked at her watch. It was after eleven. She was surprised to find it so late. She peeped out of the door of the tent. Her shoes were standing just inside. Strange place for them to be, she mused. She opened the flap. Smith was sitting against the log where she had sat the night before. His back was toward her. He had a stone in one hand and the axe was in the other. She thought he must be sharpening it. Finally she called his name. He got up at once.

The colour had come back to her cheeks.

"May I have some water, please," she said, "and a wash basin, and perhaps some soap if there is any?"

Smith fetched it from the river and placed it beside the door of the tent. She needed her comb and brush too, but did not like to ask the man for them. She did not want him rummaging through her belongings. She thought it was in the bottom of the sack. She had some side combs, and while she was waiting for the water from the river, she untangled her hair a little and dressed it after a fashion. When she had washed she came out to the camp fire. Smith had prepared some breakfast and she ate it sitting on a log.

He said nothing, but smoked his pipe in silence. He felt very nervous. He was sure she would ask how she got to bed. He meant to forestall it. He had worked out a little strategy in his mind. But he had no opportunity to test it, for she asked suddenly—

"How did I get to bed last night? You know, I have no recollection of it at all," and she looked at him with just a shadow of suspicion.

"Why, don't you remember?" he asked in the most plausible manner. Suddenly he made up his mind that if necessary he would lie to her. It had to be done, he told himself.

"I remember going to sleep by the fire here

and then nothing until this morning," she said, looking thoughtfully at him.

"You were very tired," he said, "and when I came back from the river you were sound asleep. Don't you recall my awakening you?"

She was evidently trying to do so, but the effort brought no memory. He went on—

"Yes, I had to speak to you several times before you opened your eyes, but I thought you were wide awake when you walked over to your tent."

He was not used to evasion and his voice carried no conviction.

"Well, it's very strange, but I can recall nothing at all about it." She stopped suddenly.

He glanced up quickly. Her face was crimson. Her eyes were fixed on his blue flannel shirt. He looked quickly down with a sense of impending disaster.

There on the right shoulder was a long golden hair. He thought he had never felt so badly in his life. There was nothing more to be said, and before he could even attempt it, she arose and he heard the swish of her skirts as she swept past him into her tent.

She sat down on her bed, her cheeks still flaming. She was mortified and annoyed. So much so that she cried a little. She saw it all now. This man, this perfect stranger,

had picked her up bodily and put her to bed like a baby, she thought. It was a familiarity he should not have presumed. She could not overlook it. She would not speak another word to him during the trip, she said to herself. How dare he touch her when she was asleep? No man had ever done such a thing before. For ten minutes she was unreasonably angry. Then little by little she began to cool down. She could not sit there all day, she said to herself. It would be childish to sulk. She decided to treat him with cold dignity.

In the meantime Smith continued to sharpen his axe. At last he picked off the thread of gold very carefully. His face was a study as he examined it. He cursed softly, but very profoundly. He certainly would have carried it off all right but for that bit of hair. Still it was a beautiful strand. He drew it carefully through his fingers. It was nearly three feet long. He wound it very carefully about his finger. It came off in a small fine ring—a circle of gold and copper. His sense of propriety told him he should put it in the fire. Still, he did nothing of the kind. On the contrary he pulled a compass out of his pocket. It opened like a watch. He put it in the cover. He felt very much embarrassed, and if any one had asked him he could not have told why he

did it. Then he shut up the compass and put it quickly in his pocket. When the girl came out, he was smoking his pipe.

He was very intent on the fire. She spoke to him in a cold and dignified voice. It reminded him of the first time she had addressed him.

"Don't you propose to travel to-day, Smith?"

He stood up but did not look at her. He felt he had behaved badly; still in the back of his head he thought he had done right, for she certainly seemed fresh and rested after the night's sleep.

"I have only been waiting for you," he said, "you were so tired last night and——"

"I shall wait for you down by the river," she cut in, and without another word walked down the trail toward the canoe.

Smith said nothing, but began at once to break camp and pack up the outfit. He took great pains when he loaded the canoe to arrange a comfortable place for the girl to sit. While he was doing it she walked to the other end of the flat and sat down on a big boulder facing the river.

At last he was ready and called to her.

She came back picking her way carefully over the mud. He offered her his hand to help her in.

"Thank you very much," she said, "I can get in alone."

He said nothing, but felt very small and extremely uncomfortable.

It was about one o'clock when they started. The river ran a bit swifter than heretofore and the poleing was bad. A dozen times he had to cross from side to side to find bottom. After a couple of hours he ran the boat ashore.

"What are you stopping for?" she asked in a cold voice.

He stood leaning on his pole while the water rippled alongside the canoe. Zing jumped out and ran up the beach and disappeared in the brush. Smith did not reply. He was somewhat tired; besides, he had his eye fixed on the back of her neck where some little wisps of hair were moving softly in the wind.

"What are we stopping for," she asked again a little sharply, for she felt that he was looking at her and unconsciously she put up her hands and felt her hair.

"Well," Smith began, as he looked at his watch, "it is after three, and I thought you might be hungry."

"I'm not" she said, and as she said it she felt that she was being rude.

"Besides," he continued in his calm, deep voice, "the going's been bad these last few miles and I'm a little tired."

She got up before he could help her and stepped lightly on the shore.

"Oh," she said, "if you are too tired to go on, of course we had better rest."

She was still cold, but the rudeness had gone from her manner.

Smith made a fire on the edge of the stream and in a few minutes had some coffee and a light lunch ready. He handed the girl a plate. Then he said: "come, Zing," and rather ostentatiously he went off a score of yards and sat on a log and began to eat his portion.

Miss Dick looked at him surreptitiously out of the corner of her eye. He could eat alone hereafter, she said to herself. Smith said nothing. After he had finished he came back to where he had cooked the dinner, picked up the plates and put them back in the cook-box where he carried the kitchen utensils. He placed the box back in the canoe and again they were on the river, the dog in the bow as ever.

The stream was narrower here and the current ran swiftly, so that for the next few hours his mind was busy directing the boat. Several rapid places required hard and skilful poleing, and the girl heard him breathing heavily as he threw his whole weight into the effort. She had never seen any one drive a canoe up stream the way this man was doing. She thought it

must be hard work and that he must be very strong. Several times it seemed to her as though they could not possibly get up certain places where the water ran with loud rippling tumult. But each time he found a way. She discovered herself admiring the way he did. He seemed a very competent man in every way, and she was on the point of speaking to him when she remembered that she was going to be dignified, and settling herself against the roll of tents he had placed at her back she looked off across the river.

On both sides the great forest crowded in close to the water. The sun was just setting, and she thought that after all it was very beautiful on the water at this time of the afternoon. A little farther on the stream widened out and as they rounded a bend she saw a long stretch of still water on one side. A second later she heard a sudden noise, and two great birds with much flapping of wings and splashing of water rose from the surface of the river, leaving a long wake of ripples as they got into the air. She felt the man move quickly as he dropped the paddle into the bottom of the boat, and the next second she heard him throw a shell into his rifle and almost instantly came the " Bang " of the report. One of the birds tumbled in the air and a handful of grey feathers came fluttering

down, but the bird with loud honks pulled itself together and rose higher. The ball had only cut through the tail feathers. Again came the metallic sliding of the mechanism and she heard the little splash as the ejected shell fell into the river, and again the rifle rang out, sharp as a field piece on the still air. This time the bird summersaulted in mid-air and then fell like a stone into the river. The girl was an admirer of honest sport and she knew good shooting when she saw it.

"Good shot," she exclaimed before she remembered that she was on her dignity.

The man smiled. All he said was, "Goose for supper," and this very laconically.

He paddled over and fished the bird out of the water. Its head was hanging by a shred. He was glad that he had made such a good shot. He felt a very strong desire to have this girl think well of him, even in those things which he felt were of trifling value. That he shot true, and did well the other things that were necessary in the mountains, was a matter of course to him. If he did not do them he could not survive. Many trying experiences of his earlier years in the wilderness had long since proved that simple fact to him.

Again the boat moved steadily onward over the surface of the water. Miss Dick knew lots

of men at home who were credited with being good shots and keen sportsmen. They, she thought herself, would have congratulated themselves on bringing down one of these birds with a shot gun, yet this man had with a snap shot taken out the bird's tail feathers and then with a second bullet, all but cut off its head; and this with a rifle. She would have liked to say something more about it, but she remembered her intention of holding herself aloof for the rest of the trip. She began to think it would be rather hard to do this. After a while she compromised with herself; perhaps if she maintained her attitude for a week it would be sufficient. He would have learned by that time that she would tolerate nothing approaching familiarity. Again she heard the heavy breathing behind her. Undoubtedly he was tired, for now they were in a swift part of the river once more. He must be exhausted, she thought, and then she wondered where he had slept the night before. She had seen no signs of any blankets spread for him. She recalled that he, too, had been up all the preceding night, just as she had been. Never once had he alluded to being weary save when he suggested the camp for noon. She began to feel sorry for him. Perhaps he had meant well from the start. Well, she would not speak to him to-day at least, and perhaps that would teach him a lesson.

For another hour they nosed up the Big River. With a good deal of skill Smith wormed his way up a difficult side-channel. Just ahead she saw an opening among the trees. Evidently it was an old camp ground. Probably he had had his lesson, she thought, and turning her head half around she asked in a low and decidedly pleasant voice—

"What time is it, Smith?" She had her watch on her wrist, and having already consulted it knew that it was considerably after seven. He held the canoe with his pole while he took out his watch and told her.

"Aren't you tired?" she asked, after he had poled along for a few minutes in silence.

"Just a little," he said quietly. There was a long silence and then she asked—

"Isn't that a camping place just ahead?"

It was, and he said so.

"Perhaps we had better camp for the night," she suggested; "it seems to be getting darker."

He made no comment, but a few minutes later the canoe touched ground. She held out her hand to him, and quite naturally he helped her out of the boat. The sky was a marvel of wonderful tints in the west, and the stillness of the wilds hung over all like a blanket.

"Isn't it a lovely night?" she said, and catching up her skirts she walked lightly towards the old camp ground.

CHAPTER XI

THE weather held fine for the next two days, and by putting in long hours on the river the man and the girl made good progress. Whenever they stopped for a rest, the noon-day meal, or for the evening camp, he did his best to make her comfortable. The beds he constructed for her each night were miracles of neatness and softness. He exerted his utmost talent with the meagre supplies at his disposal to prepare tempting food, and sat up nights after she had retired trying to devise fresh culinary surprises. Since the day of 'the long silence,' as Smith called it to himself, she had been kind and polite, but always extremely formal. He felt that he was on his good behaviour and that she was still somewhat suspicious of him. He saw that she was depressed and did not care to talk much; he also noticed that she did not like to be left alone, especially at night. When he would leave the camp to cut wood or bring up water from the river, her eyes followed him with a little worried look and her face resumed a

relieved expression when he returned. For the next two nights, barring a few casual references to the trip, or mention of some incident of the day, there was little conversation. He never pressed her to talk. He felt that she was going through a very severe time. When she wasn't looking at him he would steal glances at her as she stared into the fire, a little frown on her face or with an absent far-away expression in her eyes. Once he saw a tear on her cheek. She did not try to conceal it, but, without looking at him, said in a subdued voice—

"I was thinking of my poor friend. It must be very lonely down in that old camp where we made the grave. Poor Miss Weston. I think she was a good woman, Smith, a very good, kind woman." She paused a moment and added in a low voice, "A better one than I shall ever be, I'm afraid."

Smith said nothing, but put another log on the fire.

For a man he had quite a lot of tact.

He thought that in this mood the girl was adorable. He found himself watching her when he could do it without her noticing him. He was a simple man. He might not have been originally perhaps, but seven years in the mountains, most of the time alone, had made his mind direct and clean as the unpolluted air of the

wilderness. During these years he had been intent on the struggle for existence and there was little of the trivial left in his character. He had met the hardships and the dangers of his life time and again. In the summer he had played with these rivers, shot their rapids and challenged the chaos of their cañons. He had suffered hunger and lived on berries and shrubs when his grub was gone. Twice in the winter he had nearly perished from exposure to the storm and cold. But something in him had defied the elements and always he had managed to survive. He knew now that with his rifle he could wring a living from the rugged wilds. The game, the streams and nature itself were his assets; he was as much at home a thousand miles from a fellow-man as he had ever been in his father's house in his younger days. Confidence engendered by such experiences leaves its stamp on a man, and as the days slipped away Miss Dick began to feel in a subtle way the latent strength of character that was in him. She was watching him though he little realized it.

The last day on the river she had complained of the sun in her face, and for hours she had sat with her back toward the bow of the canoe. She told herself that the sun hurt her eyes, but in the bottom of her heart she was tired of watch-

ing the expanse of the river before them hour after hour. Now that she could see him she realized for the first time how severe was the physical effort required to force the boat up the stream. She could observe him too without his noticing it, for his mind was ever on the river ahead, and with a curious, slowly growing admiration she watched his keen, alert eyes studying the river as he searched for the dead water eddies and the spots where the going was easiest. Women are always attracted to a certain degree by sheer animal strength, and she gazed in wonder at this man, when in the bad places he was called upon to exert his uttermost skill and the last ounce of his strength. His muscles would relax as he drew out his pole and she would watch his keen eyes pick the next polehold, and then the quick flash of the iron-shod lance as it bit the river's bottom. Then his legs well braced would grow rigid, and she could see the great muscles of his thighs grow taut and those of his forearm swell and stand out like a bit of sculptured marble as he threw his strength on the pole. Hour after hour he would keep at it with the same monotony of dip and push, dip and push, until she thought he must be very tired.

"Isn't it very hard work?" she asked once when he was paddling up some dead water and

the going was easy. With his eyes roving up ahead he answered—

"Pretty stiff going sometimes, Miss Dick."

After a long silence she inquired—

"Aren't we putting in too long hours, perhaps?" For a moment he said nothing. Then his glance wandered back to her face, and as his eyes rested on her he said:

"Pretty long hours, Miss Dick."

She watched his face and tried to imagine how he would look without his beard. He certainly had fine eyes.

After a bit he volunteered:

"I am doing my best to get you out of the country as quickly as possible, Miss Dick. I want to make up to you as much as I can your disappointment in not going down stream, and I know the only thing in the world you long for is to see the last of these mountains and these great rivers." But the conversation did not seem to suit her and she said nothing more about it, yet she began to feel a strong approval of this man who said little, never complained, and who day after day was standing in this boat giving every ounce of his strength to make her journey as rapid as possible. Once she told herself that he was being paid for it, but even as the thought crossed her mind she felt ashamed, for she knew he would never accept

pay. She did not understand why he was like that, but little by little she began to realize that he was not as the other men she had seen in the mountains; in fact she thought he was different from most of the men she had seen anywhere. She found herself puzzling and wondering about him, who he was, why he led this life, if it paid him well, and a thousand other questions. She had no one else to look at all day, and it seemed perfectly reasonable to her that she should think about him. But always something prevented her from personal questions. She still clung to the idea that she must be aloof and dignified.

That night as they sat by the roaring campfire that Smith had made, he noticed that she was unusually thoughtful. He had fixed a seat for her with a big log for a back. She had taken off her boots and had put on her ridiculous small slippers with the trimming of fur around them. She was sitting cross legged, without her hat, and he could just see the top of one of the slippers peeping out from under her brown skirt which she had carefully spread about her. He was thinking that her hair was more wonderful by firelight than at any other time. There was an enormous mass of it and it looked soft and fluffy. He wondered how on earth she managed to dress it so that it looked so neat.

It must come down to her knees, he thought, when it was loose. In a curious kind of impersonal way the idea flitted through his mind that he wished he could see it when it was down. It was that same kind of curiosity that he felt when he wondered where certain streams headed, or about other phenomena of the wilds that he pondered over when he was alone in his mountain camps.

Miss Dick, who had been looking into the fire, caught his eye. Instinctively she put her hands up to her head.

"Is there anything the matter with my hair?" she asked quite naturally.

Smith stirred uneasily and shifted his glance. He had not meant to be caught staring at her. "Why, no, I don't know as there is," he said rather sheepishly, and began very elaborately to clean his pipe.

"You were staring at it so," she added in explanation. "I thought it might be coming down."

He said nothing, but after he had filled his pipe his eye wandered back to it again. Yes, he thought it must be fully four feet long. The girl coloured a little. She knew that he was admiring it. Somehow she did not mind very much. At last she broke the long silence by saying—

"Do you know, Smith, I have been thinking about something all the afternoon," and paused.

He looked up at her. What had she been thinking of, he wondered?

He waited with a good deal of interest for her to continue. She rubbed her small hands, and then, leaning forward a little, held them out to the blaze, and looking into the fire, proceeded in a very small, serious voice—

"Yes, I have been thinking that I ought to be of more help to you. I feel so useless," she hesitated and looked at him meditatively, "you know you do everything, and I only sit around and, well, I am just perfectly useless."

He viewed her in surprise. He was a little embarrassed.

"Oh, that's all right," he said, "it's hard enough for you to be in this sort of a fix. Now don't you give another thought to that. I don't mind it in the least."

He was pleased, but she saw that he did not take her suggestion very seriously and it annoyed her. She broke up a few small twigs and threw them into the blaze and then said with much conviction, and an air of finality—

"Yes, but I mind a great deal. We are alone together and hereafter I shall insist on doing my share of the work. Of course I cannot pole a canoe perhaps;" and she stopped to see if he

was going to say anything. He did not. On the contrary he was gazing into the fire very seriously.

She went on a little uncertainly—

"But I think I could chop wood and help around camp, if you would show me how and what to do."

Smith looked up at her. She was very serious. His eyes were fixed upon her small hands. He could not imagine her swinging an axe.

"To-morrow," he said, "I'll teach you anything I can, Miss Dick. You know it is no hardship for me,—all this sort of thing"—and he gave a sweeping motion to indicate the camp—"but, as you say, every little helps out, and if you really feel that way, well, I shall appreciate it very much;" and he spoke as though he really meant every word he said.

The girl was pleased and a feeling of great approval of the man swept over her. He was so quiet, so respectful, and withal so strong and masterful. Why weren't other men who were in her class of life strong and simple as he was, she wondered?

She did not speak for a while, but gazed long and deeply into the fire. She was thinking of the men she knew at home. There was young Harrison, the son of a Trust magnate, who for two years had been teasing her to marry him.

He was smart, well dressed, an easy, fluent talker and quite the man of the world. She had thought him clever and witty too at times, and in a vague way had felt that some time or other she might accept him. She remembered his suave ways, his perfect manners, and his easy speeches at receptions and afternoon teas. She had always rather admired his *savoir faire*. He had the reputation, too, of being somewhat of an amateur sportsman, was said to be a good shot, and she knew he could ride, for she had seen him play polo, and once when she was visiting in England they had ridden to hounds together. She had thought he looked very dashing in his immaculate hunting costume, and he had ridden well at fences and across country. Then she remembered him again on a yachting trip in the West Indies. She had thought him well set up, she remembered, when they had all been in bathing together at Palm Beach that winter, and he always looked well in his flannels and yachting suits. Among her set he was considered a very manly fellow. She could not remember that he had shown much interest in anything but amusing himself and trying to marry her. She glanced across the fire at her companion. Involuntarily she made a quick comparison of the men. There sat the trapper, leaning easily against the stump,

looking thoughtfully into the fire, his strong, earnest face shining red in the firelight. He had put on his mackinaw jacket, and the turned-up collar under the big campaign hat set off his whole face. His muscular hands were clasped over his knees. They were very clean, and she wondered how he managed to keep his nails in such excellent condition. He glanced up as he felt her gaze upon him.

"Well," he said in his deep gentle voice, "were you going to say something?"

She looked back at the fire and shook her head.

It was getting cold. Smith got up and went over to her tent and coming back with her great fuzzy blanket coat, stood for a moment with his eyes upon her. She glanced up quickly.

"Won't you slip this on?" he said. "It is getting very chilly out here."

"Oh, thank you," she said; "I am going to bed soon, but you might throw it over my shoulders, if you don't mind."

When he had done it he picked up the pails and started down to the river for some water. She watched his sturdy figure move off through the brush and disappear beyond the circle of the firelight.

"Of course," she said to herself, "he isn't a gentleman like Jack Harrison, and all that,

but still, well, I'd rather have him out here under the same conditions than I would Jack;" and then she patted the dog gently. She took off one of her slippers and carefully shook out some pine needles that had worked into it. Then she stretched her small foot toward the fire and studied it with great care.

"You know, Zing," she said to the dog, "if I ever made another trip like this I wouldn't bring any silk stockings. They don't wear well;" and she wriggled one little toe which showed pink through a very appreciable hole in the stocking.

Just then Smith came back. He saw just a flash of a slim ankle disappearing under her skirt. Miss Dick got her foot back into the slipper and said with dignity, "Good night, Smith; I think I shall go to bed," and disappeared into her tent.

Smith sat down again by the fire. All of this was upsetting him tremendously. This constant contact and intimacy with this girl was working on him like leaven in bread. He was not a romantic man, and he was not one giving to sentimental dreaming. Still something deep down within him stirred him deeply. He wished that she had remained as he first had known her; then he would not have felt this subtle unrest; he could not realize that she

was the same girl. To him she seemed a mere child, and yet behind it all something told him that within that slight girlish figure there was the making of a strong woman. He did not think she lacked character. It was obvious that too much money and nothing to do had given her absolutely false ideas of life. But now for the first time, he said to himself, she is thinking. He did not know about what exactly, but the long silence around the camp-fire at night and the little frowns and sombre looks which he had seen, suggested to him that the real woman, the vital personality of her, was wakening to life.

Since her friend's death she had not talked at all of herself, and to-night, as he had seen, she was readjusting her opinion of herself. She was beginning, for the first time, to see herself as she really was, and even at that very moment she was lying on her bed of soft needles lost in thought. She was very much dissatisfied and was coming to feel that she was not a particularly able or useful girl. If she were alone here, she would simply sit and starve, whereas this man whom she had so looked down upon would not starve under any circumstances. Jack Harrison, she reflected, would probably be as helpless here as she was. Then her mind drifted back to the man by the fire. She thought that

he must have liked her hair. She wondered if he thought she was good looking. Not of course that it made any difference, because she would probably never see him again once they got out of the wilderness.

Still, it must have made some little difference, after all, for in a few minutes she found herself wondering again what the man really thought about her. He studied her a great deal, she reflected, but then he looked at everything. When he wasn't watching her his restless eyes were studying the river, the trees, the mountains, and in fact everything that came within their range of vision. It must be strange to him to see a woman out here in these wilds, and of course he would observe her curiously. He was a very kind man, and as her mind ran back over the past few days she recalled a hundred little simple acts of thoughtfulness. He must be a good man, too, was the next idea that drifted through her mind, for his eyes looked so honest and earnest. He had been good to her, she was sure of that. Then she wondered what he must have thought of her manners to him in those first days. Perhaps he still felt angry about it. Something told her that as long as she was absolutely dependent on him he would never let her see even if he were angry with her. He

must have felt her to be impossible, she said to herself. After all, he had been trying to help them, and she had really insulted him. She wondered if he realized it, and then she remembered that he had said as much to her the day he had come back to report the drowning of her canoemen. At last she grew sleepy and twisted her little body about in the nest of boughs, stretched herself a few times in luxurious comfort and then with a long sigh fell fast asleep.

Outside the man was rolled in a blanket under a spruce tree, but he was not asleep. He kept thinking about her hair.

"Yes;" he thought, "it must be fully four feet long," and at last he, too, drifted off into oblivion.

CHAPTER XII

IT was unusually early the next morning when he called her. He always awoke early, and whether he got up or not he made a survey of the weather. The sun was just coming up over the mountains. Most men would have seen nothing peculiar about it. This one, if you had asked him, could not have told why exactly, but somehow he felt that there was going to be a change in the weather, and he told the girl so when she came out of her tent and stood warming her hands by the campfire.

She had on her big blanket coat, for it was cold. He never could get used to her in the morning, she always looked so sweet and clean and wholesome.

"Why, I should have said it was going to be a lovely day," she said, between mouthfuls of oatmeal, which she was eating as she sat on a log. "What makes you think there's going to be a change?"

He did not answer her directly, for he was kneeling over the frying-pan before the fire. At last he said—

"I'm anxious to get up to the little flat above here before it sets in to rain for a spell. That's why I took the liberty of waking you up so early. Are you ready for a bit of bacon?" and he handed her a long crisp piece on the end of a fork. She took it gingerly in her fingers and began to bite it daintily.

"How long will that take?" she asked, after a few seconds.

"Well," he responded slowly, "I have made it in two days from here; of course I was alone then."

She looked at him with just a faint protest as she said—

"Is it so much slower going with me? I'm not very big, you know;" and she smiled just a little as she looked at him. But again he did not give her a direct answer.

"If you will help me in the canoe," he said, "we can make it to-morrow all right. Will you?" and he turned quite abruptly and looked at her so intently that she dropped her eyes to the fire promptly.

"Why, yes, of course I will," she said quietly; "you know that was our agreement last night;" and she glanced up at him with a whimsical little smile.

He had remembered it, of course, and he seriously thought that with her help he could

go much faster. The upper part of the river was swifter and harder for a man to work up alone. If she in the boat would hold the nose off shore, he thought that in many places he could " line up " the bad spots. Besides he wanted to put her to the test. He thought it would be a good thing for her to have something to do on the way and keep her mind occupied. It would make her sleep better at night, he told himself. He found that he was giving a most unusual amount of time and thought to her health and physical condition. She would be a different woman when he finished with her. After breakfast, while he was smoking his pipe, he explained to her just what she might do. She listened with the closest attention to everything he said. He made her feel that she was to take an active part in his work, and she felt a great satisfaction in the thought that he was taking her seriously.

They made an early start that day and for the first time she understood what he meant by 'lining up.' Whenever they reached an open stretch of sandy or muddy shore along the river bank, he would go in close to the shore and step out into the water and run up to the beach until the line attached to the bow was drawn taut, and then half trot along the bank pulling the boat forward at twice the speed he could pole it. He showed the girl how she must stand in

the bow with her feet well apart and braced so she might not fall, and with the long pole keep the bow from running into the shore. Sometimes they would proceed in this way three or four hundred yards, when he would step lightly into his place and take up his pole again. He gave her a paddle too, and when they crossed the river he would let her paddle as well as himself.

As they worked their way further and further up the river they found long gravel bars, now on one side and now on the other, and a frequency of gravel islands in the centre of the river. Nearly half of the time, now he was in the water, sometimes up to his boot tops and occasionally above his waist as he waded from one little bar to another. By noon they had made a good distance, and when they camped for lunch on a little island in the river, he pointed out to her to the south a big mountain, and told her that just beneath one of its jagged shoulders was the little flat where his horses and cache were waiting for him.

"Why surely, Smith," she said, "we can make that to-night?" Her face was flushed with the exercise, and her hair was hanging in wisps across her cheeks. But he smiled a little and shook his head as he replied:

"We're doing fine all right, but I'll be pleased

enough if we get there to-morrow afternoon."

The girl was full of eagerness to be off, and at her solicitation they kept on the river until well on in the afternoon. In the back of her mind she felt sure she was right about the mountains being near and reaching the cache that night, but as the hours slipped away she began to realize that she was mistaken. The going here was much worse, and twice the man had gone into the holes in the river up to his waist. The first time she had given a little cry of sympathetic alarm and had begged him to camp and dry himself, but he only laughed his deep pleasant laugh when she suggested it.

"No," he said; "no time for that if we're to get into the flat before we have rain."

She looked carefully across the sky. The sun was still shining, but a lot of little fleecy clouds were drifting across the heavens, and the sun was not as bright as it had been, though she would never have noticed it had he not called her attention to it. Still she did not feel sure that it would rain, but this time she said nothing. Late in the afternoon, while he was wading across a little run between two gravel bars, he stepped into a hole and for an instant went out of sight, but a second later had his footing, and was again dragging the boat along a long strip of rocky beach. Miss Dick

heard him laugh a discomfited laugh as he emerged on the bank, the water running off of him in little rivulets.

"Quick," he said, "catch my hat," for it was drifting off downstream.

The girl leaned out of the canoe and rescued it. The water, she found, as she took it out, was like ice; he must be nearly frozen. The next time he got in the boat she insisted with much dignity that they should camp at the first available place. But he only laughed good-humouredly. He was poleing again now. His hat lay in the bow of the boat. In its brim and stamped on the hat band were some initials, and she leaned back to study them out more closely, for the band was very old.

"J. W.," she read at last.

"So his name isn't Smith at all," she reflected, and she turned around suddenly with a question on her lips, but when she saw him she changed her mind.

"Won't you please make camp now?" was what she said.

He had his eye on the river and for a moment made no reply; then he responded—

"Really, it isn't a bit necessary," for he was figuring on a place to spend the night several miles above. They were making good time, he told himself, and if they could reach the camp

he had in mind, they might make the flat by noon the next day. Miss Dick looked at him over her shoulder, and then in a very low voice said—

"Do this, Smith, just to please me."

The man felt himself grow warm all over. She had never spoken so intimately to him since they had been together. Had she been watching him she would have seen the blue eyes kindle in a way that might have embarrassed her a little, but she only heard the quiet calm voice with its low, gentle tones as it replied:

"Very well; I'll land at once, if it is your wish;" and instantly he dropped his pole in the boat and with the paddle he began crossing the stream and in a few minutes ran the canoe up on a small gravel bank.

Miss Dick felt herself glow with pleasure at his reply. He was such a strong, masterful man that his immediate acquiescence in her request as soon as she put it touched her.

When he had carried their belongings up into the brush he called to her:

"You might make a fire if you like;" and without looking at her he picked up his axe and began to cut a place in the brush for her tent. In fifteen minutes he had a flat area cleared. She was kneeling down blowing on some boughs and twigs that refused to burn.

"Oh dear," she said in a very childish but

winsome way, "it won't burn at all. You see, I'm absolutely worthless;" and she looked up at him in an apologetic kind of way.

"You will soon learn," he said, "and anyway you have done a good day's work already. Let me show you how to do it."

With his hunting knife he made a great seam in a near-by birch tree, and in two seconds rolled back a whole section of the dry, pitchy bark, and before she knew it had a ripping big fire burning and snapping cheerfully. He stood with his back to the flames, warming his hands, which he spread out behind him.

"You are dripping wet," the girl said to him sympathetically; "you must change your clothes at once."

He turned to her and smiled that nice refined smile that showed his clean white teeth.

"I'm used to it—quite used to it—have been for several years, you know;" and then he stopped, for he had made up his mind he would not discuss any of his personal affairs with her. Perhaps in later years when they met on the outside it would be different. Now he stood on his own merits, with no famous name or family kin to win him respect or position. He did not intend to give her any clues as to his life out here. But he looked at her very kindly, and all the time he never knew that her small

head was puzzling over those initials she had seen on the hatband. She looked at him searchingly with those deep grey eyes of hers, but before she could speak he hastened to add—

"Anyway it wouldn't be of the slightest use to worry about it, for I haven't another rag of clothes this side the cache on the flat." He stopped and looked down at himself and added: "Don't you suppose if I had I would have thrown away these old tatters?" and he laughed a little. "You know I never figured on entertaining a guest like you when I hit the trail this spring;" and as he steamed before the blaze, he looked very pleasantly at her.

She glanced down at his clothes. They did look hard, but she only said, "Your clothes look plenty good enough," for she remembered that he was wet and chilled now in her behalf. Then she added:

"I will get some water out of the river;" and very briskly she stepped off in that direction. Zing had lain down by the fire and for once did not offer to accompany her.

Smith was feeling rather cheerful. Down in the depth of his soul he was beginning to recognize something that he had never felt or dreamed of before. He did not try to analyse it, nor did he dwell on it, but instinctively he knew it was there, and it made his blood flow

more warmly all through his great clean body. Suddenly he heard a hurry of feet and the girl, her face flushed with excitement, came running back from the river. He could see the twinkle of her ankles as she held up her skirts in running.

"There's some big animal down by the river," she said; "come quick."

Smith reached for his rifle and followed her back to the river bank. It was coming sunset, and the last rays of the setting sun shone red on the trees that stood close into the bank of the river. Four hundred yards away on a bar stood a great bull moose. He had waded out on to a sand bar and stood directly in the sunshine taking long breaths and swinging his head from side to side. The girl came gasping up behind the man. His eyes were hard and alert, all his hunter's instinct was uppermost.

"Sh!" he whispered, and she felt a hand like steel grasp her wrist, and pull her down into the brush. "He's got our wind at last. Look, he's off;" and just at that moment the great animal turned and started at an ungainly trot for the bushes. Had he been a smaller animal the man would have killed him in his tracks, but he hated the idea of wasting so much meat. So he handed his rifle to the girl, but before she could bring it to her shoulder the moose disappeared into the forest.

She looked at him, her face showing her disappointment.

"Why didn't you kill him?" she said in a sad little voice. "I did so want some fresh meat."

He looked at her sharply.

"You did?" he said; "well, if I'd known that it might have been different, but it's too late now. Only don't be discouraged. I'll see that you have some very soon." He liked fresh meat himself, but he hated to kill and leave; but if she wanted it—well, that was a very different matter.

When they got on the river the next day there was no sun to be seen at all. Smith had had a glimpse of it when he first rolled out of his blankets, but long before Miss Dick had come out of her tent it had disappeared in a bank of clouds. He hurried her through breakfast, for he wanted to make camp before it began to rain.

By noon they were well up the river and only a few miles from his cache. There was a bad log jam here, and he made the girl get out and walk up through the brush while he worked his way up with pole and line. Here they stopped ten minutes and ate a little lunch. When she stepped back into the canoe the first drop of rain fell on the river.

"We're going to get it sure now," he said to

the girl; "perhaps we had better camp right here."

"Oh no," she said, manifestly disappointed; "it's only a few miles to your cache. Let's get there to-day surely, and then if you want to we can camp for a day and rest up, for I'm sure you are very tired."

There was a new note in her voice now, less formal and just a little intimate, which seemed to the man very pleasant to listen to, and so without another word he pushed off once more. In a moment the whole surface of the river was covered with the splashes of the falling raindrops.

"It's just like a fountain," Miss Dick cried, gleefully as she watched the increasing effect of the downpour. Smith, however, had no such enthusiasm and felt that perhaps he had made a mistake in not insisting on camping. He ran into still water and holding the boat by spearing with his pole a great log that leaned out over the river, he leaned down in the bottom of his canoe and dragged out some pack covers that were in the bottom. They were wet and dirty, but still they would give her some protection. She demurred a little when he handed them over to her.

"Please don't argue about it," he said a little sharply; "you must do as I ask you."

She was a little piqued at his tone, but somehow she did not question his authority and with a grimace she wrapped the canvas about her shoulders. Then she remembered her hat, for already the water was running off it in rivulets. With a quick motion she took out the long pins, and put them in her mouth and hustled the hat under the canvas cover.

"I must save my best hat, you know," she said with the pins still in her mouth, and she looked over her shoulder at the man, but he was busy with his work and made no response.

Now it began to rain in earnest, and in a second everything that was not covered was drenched. Zing sat disconsolately in the bow, his head hanging over the rail while little streams of water ran down his cheeks, and a regular river down his shaggy black back. Miss Dick could feel the cold water beating through her hair, and it made her head feel cold. The little creases in the canvas collected pools of water and every time she moved torrents cascaded down on her skirt, as the folds readjusted themselves. She pinned the canvas close about her throat and even then she could feel the water pelting on her neck and running down her back. Once she put her hand up to her hair and uttered a little exclamation of disgust; it was as wet as a sponge. The man was poleing now with all his

energy. He was already drenched, but to him it was just a part of the day's work, and he cared not at all but for the girl. Every few minutes he would ask her:

"Are you getting very wet?" and always she would reply gaily—

"No, indeed, I am perfectly comfortable. Don't hurry on my account." And every time the man smiled a little, for he was thinking that she was a good companion on a rainy day.

But the girl soon began to feel cold. For one thing her hands were wet, and as the rain was like ice water, they began to get numb. Then too she realized that she was sitting in a small lake of water. Little by little she began to feel chilled. She kept twisting in her clothes with the vague idea that some dry place might give warmth to some place that was damp. But it didn't work, and she soon settled down to a small object, cold and miserable. The man, she thought, must be colder than she, and as she could not imagine his complaining, she had no idea of uttering any lament. More than an hour slipped past, one of the worst through which she ever remembered having lived.

At last, as they rounded a bend in the river, Smith remarked in a low casual voice—

"Do you see that big old fir-tree standing up on that little knoll just ahead?"

"Yes." She nodded her head.

"That's our camp, and we'll be there in just about three minutes;" and as he said it he shoved the boat up the river with an impetuosity that bespoke his eagerness to be at the end of the journey. She was quite blue with the cold when he helped her out of the boat. His heart smote him as he looked at her. Never again, he thought, would he keep her out in the rain like this.

"You are half frozen," he said gently, as he took her small hand. It lay in his like a piece of ice. She smiled sweetly and blinked her eyes as the water trickled from her hair into them.

"Really, I am not very cold," she said through teeth that fairly chattered.

A trail came up from the river to the knoll where he had said his cache was.

"Our camp ground is up there," he said, and looked at her sharply. A strong impulse seized him to pick her up bodily and carry her up under the trees above, where she would be out of the downpour. She coloured a little, and switching up her dress with one hand and holding her bedraggled brown hat in the other, she ran up the hill, for she did not know just what his look might indicate.

When he came up a few minutes later, bending

beneath a great burden of camp equipage, he found her standing by the trunk of the big spruce trying to wrap the canvas closer about her.

The country here was much more open and there was a clearing of an acre or more, in the centre of which was a group of half a dozen great spruce trees. The biggest grew a little apart from the rest on the crest of the knoll, and it was under this that the shivering girl stood. Smith went toward the little clump a few rods away.

"I'll have a place fixed up for you in about three shakes of a lamb's tail," he called to her. He dropped his bundle, which had been swung over his shoulder by the axe handle, and went to work. The great branches of the spruce trees were growing out eight or ten feet from the trunk within a few feet of the ground. Swinging his axe with one hand, and holding a branch by its extreme end with the other, Smith lopped off a limb above his head as far in toward the trunk as he could reach. Then shoving the branches away he worked in close to the trunk so that Miss Dick could hardly see him, and the next instant the big branches began falling in all directions. In three minutes he had trimmed off all the nether limbs, leaving the trunk bare and making a shelter beneath

the uncut boughs that stretched overhead as impervious to the water as an umbrella. Then he stepped over to the next tree and in the same way trimmed off the branches leaving an opening in between, the floor of which was as dry as a bone.

"Come over here," he called to the girl, who was still standing under the solitary tree.

She ran across the opening and exclaimed with delight :

"What a wonderful place you've made here all in a few minutes," she said brightly.

Smith made no reply, for he was busy pitching her tent on the dry ground under the over-spreading limbs. He found some old tupee poles and so it did not take him long. The moment the tent was up, with guys made fast, he threw back the flaps. He had pitched it with the end looking out toward the clearing and its front beyond the trees, so that he could make a camp-fire before it and still run no danger of setting off the overhanging tree. Near by stood a lone pine dead and withered. He threw his hat into the tent and attacked the tree with his axe with a vigour that made its dead trunk ring. In five minutes it came down with a crash. He walked to the small end where the upper ten feet had been snapped off in the fall. In four or five blows he broke this piece up with his

axe and with his arm full came back to the tent, apologizing a little for his slowness in getting a fire. He laid his biggest piece over the next in size, and with one blow of the axe split it wide open, and then shivered each piece into kindling the heart of which was white and dry as the inside of an oven. With his hunting knife he pared off a hatful of shavings and in two minutes the camp-fire was burning briskly.

But he did not stop. He went back to the tree he had cut down, and standing on the fallen trunk he began to hew it in six-foot lengths. The biggest was nearly ten inches at the butt. He dragged it up before the tent for a back log. Then he cut a couple of smaller logs from the upper end, and placed them lying one end toward the tent and the other across his back log. These pieces he notched so that they would not roll off. Then he cut another good-sized log and placed it above the first. Again he attacked his fallen tree and soon had half a dozen big fire logs. Two of these he split into smaller pieces and piled into the open fireplace that he had reared. The big back logs threw the heat into the tent and already its wet canvas sides were steaming before it.

The girl had watched the whole with admiration and approval. Next, Smith went to the river and moved up the rest of the baggage. His

own he threw under a near-by tree, where it would be out of the rain. Then he came back and stood before her with a look of determination on his face.

"You are very wet," he said, as though he expected to encounter opposition.

"Yes, I am some," she replied with a smile as she looked from her dripping dress to his face and then added, "why, what makes you look so cross?"

"You must change your clothes at once," he said. "Everything," he added, and looked with some embarrassment at the fire.

She glanced at him with a little queer smile but said nothing.

"Have you everything?" he asked, laying great stress on the last word?

She coloured a little. "Yes, I guess I have," she said, in a very modest small voice, "only I haven't any other dress," and she glanced up at him, but he still was looking into the fire with his back toward her. He meant to go through with this to the bitter end. She was to be warm and dry at the soonest possible moment and he was going to be sure that it was done. He went off a bit and cut some more poles and a few stakes. She wondered what on earth he was about. He came back and soon had before the tent a pole balanced on two forked stakes set near the fire.

Again he turned his back to her and looked into the blaze. This he felt was a delicate subject to handle, but it had to be done.

" Now listen to me," he said with great authority, " you take off your dress and hang it on this pole before the fire. Then you put on dry—well, you put on dry everything. In the meantime I'm going out to look for my horses. It's two now, and I won't be back until four, and you can just remember that there isn't another living being within hundreds of miles," and before she could make any reply he picked up his axe and rifle and strode out of the clearing.

Her face was a little flushed. He was rather unconventional, she thought, but he was refined and nice. And then quite unexpectedly two little tears ran down her cheeks and fell on the ground.

CHAPTER XIII

IT was after five when Smith came back. He entered the little clearing from an entirely different direction from which he had left it. Miss Dick did not hear him coming until he had almost reached the fire. She looked up quickly. He was wet and dripping, and the rain was running in rivulets out of his beard, while every time he moved his boots oozed water. He had something slung over his shoulder. He stopped by the fire and threw it down with a chunk. It was a young deer. Still standing in the rain he looked at the girl.

She had rolled one of his logs into the door of the tent and was sitting just inside where the rain could not reach her. She had on the little slippers and was drying her hair. The whole mass of it was down, a great wave of fluffiness thrown forward over each shoulder. She was running her hands through it and holding it out between her fingers so that the heat from the fire might reach in among the strands and dry it thoroughly. He saw her before she even heard him approaching, and at first he could not see

her face at all, for it was completely hidden by the hair. Her head was bent forward a little in order that the warm waves from the fire might seep into the very roots. When she heard him she parted her hair with her hands and looked through the volume of it at the object he had thrown to the ground. But the man was looking at the hair. He felt a great satisfaction in it somehow, just as he did in anything that was beautiful. It seemed to flow in undulating waves just as though it had been curled by a hair-dresser, but he knew it must be naturally that way.

The girl grew quite pink as she felt his eyes upon her. Still she did not feel in the least displeased. She could not have told why if you had asked her. Smith felt a curious feeling of unrest and unreality. He could not have analysed it.

"It is just like one of those Titian women in the Florence Gallery," he said in an absent way.

Miss Dick looked up at him sharply. What a curious thing for a trapper to say, she thought, and she looked very puzzled as she said, "It looks like what?" She was still quite rosy. Perhaps it was the heat from the fire. Smith started. He had not realized that he had spoken aloud. He shuffled a little consciously and then said vaguely—

"I was saying it looked almost dry."

"Oh," said the girl, and then, "I'm so warm and comfortable now. And I'm so glad you killed something to eat, and did you find your horses?"

She thought they had exhausted her hair as a desirable topic.

But Smith was unusually stupid to-night, for he kept staring at her until finally she avoided his glance and said in a very low voice, "Please don't look at me so hard;" then without looking up she added, "Tell me about the horses, did you find them?"

He started. "The horses?" he said, just as though it were a new idea. "Oh yes, certainly the horses." He paused and then said, "Well, to tell you the truth, I haven't been looking for them."

"You haven't?" she asked in genuine surprise, "why I thought that was where you went," and she looked at him inquiringly.

"No," he said, "I forgot all about them. I've been hunting instead," and he stared into the fire.

"Oh," she said, and nothing more. There was a long pause and then in his even, dispassionate tone he began; "Curious thing this," and he poked the dead deer with his toe, "first one I ever saw this side the summit. I crossed his trail a mile from here. It was so unusual

for this country that I got interested and kept after it." Another long pause ensued before he added, "killed it on the mountain five miles from here."

She looked at him through the masses of her hair. He certainly was unkempt and very dirty, wet and covered with mud as he was, but the idea suddenly flashed through her mind that all things considered he was much more of a man than Jack Harrison, even if he was in rags and badly soiled. She had a very queer feeling near her heart. At last, in a very gentle voice, she said, "Do you know you are standing in the rain, Smith."

She peeped at him through her hair. He looked at her, but the tresses covered her face completely. He thought that he had never seen anything so beautiful, but he only said, "You must be hungry, and I know you're tired. I'll get some supper for you—fresh meat—you know, and then after you're asleep I'll just dry out myself, and try and get into some clean clothes," and in his practical and efficient way he began his preparations for the evening meal. He knew how to cook fresh meat, and the girl thought she had never eaten anything quite so delicate and savoury as the bits of fried flesh that he kept sliding on to her plate as fast as she could eat them.

The rain stopped after supper, and Smith stood on the far side of the fire, his clothes steaming. He seemed perfectly unconscious of being soaked, and as he slowly drew on his pipe seemed to her to be the picture of comfort.

"Don't you mind being wet?" she asked at last. To her it seemed incredible that any one should be so apparently oblivious of physical comfort.

He laughed his low quiet laugh.

"Well," he replied, "of course one likes to be dry and warm, but then on the contrary one gets quite used to being wet and cold, you know. As a matter of fact I had forgotten all about being wet until you mentioned it." He looked down at his clothes. "Anyway," he added, "I think I'm almost dry," and then he stared back into the fire.

He was very much upset to-night. He never remembered having anything disconcert him quite as much as this girl did. It had been pretty bad, he thought, seeing her constantly on the river, but to-night it was worse. He had had a much harder hunt for the deer than he told the girl. He had trailed it through the wet forest losing the tracks a dozen times, but picking them up again where sandy beaches or muddy flats had given fresher impressions. He had been bound he would have that deer for her

supper if it took him all night. He had walked nearly ten miles, and had never once given a thought to the horses from the time he saw the deer track. Being three hours by himself, and in his accustomed mood, had thrown his mind back into its more habitual channels. Then he came back to the camp and there in the tent, as though she were a regular part of his outfit and of his life, sat the girl drying her hair. It made a very curious impression on him. He was afraid of her, and afraid of himself lest he should offend her by some sudden statement of admiration. He could not keep his eyes from her, and yet he felt that he must do so. The girl was alone and perfectly helpless and dependent on him. It would be very cowardly and contemptible if he took advantage of her by treating her otherwise than with the most remote respect.

The more he thought about the girl the less he thought of himself. He had not been much given these last years to self-analysis. He had plenty of self-respect, and had cared very little what others thought of him. But now it was all different. Why had he ever been such a fool as to bury himself in the wilds all these years? Here he was almost thirty and little better than a barbarian. Such a girl as this, who sat by the fire with her little fur-clad feet,

could not help but look down on him. Had he only stayed at home and followed business as they wanted him to do, what might he not have been now? He had ruined all his chances he kept telling himself. She was a kind girl at heart, and he was sure that she felt sorry for him and pitied his lack of manners. On the whole he felt very miserable indeed, and the more he saw of the girl the more did he come to despise himself.

All those ways of the mountains in which he so excelled seemed to him the most unworthy and trifling achievements. Any fool could hunt and track and chop wood, he told himself; why even the Breeds could beat him at it, or if not actually beat him they were as good as he was. It would be an insult to this girl, he felt, for him to even look at her except with the respect one pays to a superior. He would hold himself well in, he kept thinking. He must be on his guard. She must never suspect what he was thinking. He could never forgive himself if he let her see. As it was now they might have a very companionable time for these next weeks. If she should see that he looked upon her differently it would spoil it all. She would hate him for it.

He knew very little about women.

While he stood thus by the fire glaring into

the embers and thinking all these things the girl was studying his face. She had done up her hair in two long braids, and one was hanging down over each shoulder, with a little loose bunch of unbraided strands at the end.

"What on earth are you so gloomy about, Smith?" she asked at last, for she could not understand the frowns and wrinkled brows.

He did not look up.

"I was thinking what a hard job I would have hunting horses to-morrow," he said gloomily.

"Oh," she said, "is that all?" Somehow his reply had disappointed her. She felt a little impulse to ask him what his real name was. Something warned her to do nothing of the kind. He looked very disconsolate. She wanted to say something kind to him. But she did not. On the contrary she said in a very cold voice, "Good-night, Smith, I think I'll go to bed."

The man started. "Oh," he said, "good-night."

Before undressing Miss Dick sat on her bed of boughs for a long time, and looked long and intently at one small foot from which she had taken the slipper.

After she was gone, Smith did not make himself a bed under one of the spruce trees as usual. He was alone now, for he had taught Zing to stay with the girl, and he slept curled up at the

foot of her bed. He was only a dog, of course, but to her he meant companionship, and when she awoke in the night, she did not have that feeling of aloneness which so depresses those afar in the wilderness, when they are not used to its vast silences.

As he sat by the fire, Smith thought that he had never felt so miserable and desolate in his life. He wished he had never seen this girl at all. Before that he had been happy in a way; now he felt that he had been shown something that was not for him. It was an aggravation, and as he thought of it, it gnawed him until he felt an acute misery that he had never realized could be possible. He was not given to romancing, and in all his thoughts he never once dreamed of calling himself in love. He did not care for the word; to him it had always smacked of sentimentalism or romance. All that he recognized was that something new and dominant had seized upon him. He felt a craving, an indescribable longing for this girl, such as he could in no way explain or define. The emotion that he experienced was altogether above and beyond anything that was physical. It seemed as though a great void had suddenly been created within him, an aching emptiness that nothing but this girl could fill. He no longer cared about her character, her disposition, or even her looks.

In a vague way he felt that he would welcome the realization that she was bad or selfish, or had any other of the list of human undesirabilities. It would make her more human and nearer his level, he thought, and anyway it didn't matter what she was; it was just she alone of all the things that the world held that he wanted.

The conflagration that had struck him ran through his being as a forest fire through the timber that has been scorching in the sun through a summer of drought. A man who had lived more among people would have been more immune. But he was as vulnerable to this attack on his emotions as were the Indians at the approach of civilization when the ravages of tuberculosis and the white men's diseases found their bodies utterly unprepared for this species of assault. This man was as helpless as a child. He was in the grip of a force such as he had never dreamed of, the primitive longing of a refined, pure-minded man for the one maid that had ever lingered a moment in his life or in his imagination.

He sat by his fire glaring gloomily into its depths hour after hour. He was tired, but sleep was utterly impossible. At last a faint grey appeared in the east. It was the coming dawn. The night had passed without his knowing it. As soon as it was light enough to see he went

down and took a plunge in the river. Its chill made his blood tingle. Then he came back, and prepared a breakfast which he ate alone. He had intended to clean up and shave, but he thought he would wait until he had found his horses. Zing heard him moving about, and came out of the tent yawning and stretching himself. It had cleared off completely and the sun was shining out of a cloudless sky. Smith heard the girl moving in the tent, so he said:

"You will find your breakfast ready when you are. Also there is some bread and cold meat in the cook-box under the big spruce. This is for your lunch." The moving about inside ceased. He wondered if she had understood him. Then he heard her low clear voice.

"Why, Smith," it said, "aren't you going to be here for lunch?"

"No, I'm afraid not," he said. "I'm going after my horses, and it may take me all day to find them. Zing will stay with you. You aren't afraid of being alone, are you?"

"No-o-o," she said slowly and utterly without conviction; "but please come back as soon as you can."

There was a pause. He was piling up some wood for the fire, enough to last all day.

"You will, won't you?" she asked again from inside the tent.

" Yes," he answered in a low voice, and without another word picked up his rifle and axe and was gone.

The girl dressed herself leisurely and lingered long over her breakfast. She wondered why he had been so short with her. She wished he had waited and had taken breakfast with her. Of course, she thought, he is very quiet and doesn't talk much, but it is nice to have him around, he seems so big and self-reliant and kind. She put on some water to boil as she had seen him do and then washed the dishes. She was rather pleased with herself. After that she made up the fire and for a long time sat in the door of her tent. For a while she thought of her friend, and then she tried to think about her family at home, but somehow in spite of herself her mind kept drifting back to the man. Who was he, anyway? she wondered. Then she recalled his allusion to her hair as being like a Titian. Certainly he was no common trapper. Then just a little flood of pink glowed in her cheek. However, he was very nice. She wished she knew what his real name was. Perhaps sometime she might ask him. Still she thought he might not like it if she did. She wondered why he was out here. Had he committed a crime of some sort, and was he a fugitive from justice? She hesitated, to see if she would feel horrified

at the idea. She was a little surprised to find that she did not. She pondered a long time. Perhaps he was married and had come out here because he did not like his wife. Then she remembered that he had spoken of seven years in the mountains. No, she did not think it could be that; in a funny remote chamber of her mind she found a faint little voice protesting that it couldn't be that. She hoped it wasn't anyway. Not that it made any difference to her, of course, whether he had or not, but still she hoped he hadn't, just the same. She didn't like men who left their wives. She was sure he never would have done it, even if he hadn't liked her.

Her mind came back to the criminal from justice, but somehow that was not convincing either. Then she found herself wishing that he would come back. She looked at her watch. It was past noon. She waited an hour and then ate some of the lunch which he had said she would find in the cook-box. It was very warm in the middle of the day. She went into her tent and tried to sleep, but she could not. She began to wish very much he would return. She was very lonely. Then she was glad that the dog was there. After a while she got up and went down to the river and sat on a log and watched the great stream flowing on and on. She wondered where it all came from,

if it ever had a beginning, and if it would always be flowing along just this way after they were all dead and buried. Then she thought a little about death and her friend and the lonely grave, and this brought her back to the man again. She wished very earnestly now that he would come. Supposing anything had happened to him? She dismissed this thought, for it made her realize how dependent she was on him, and besides she didn't like to think of it. She saw the marks of his great boots in the mud, where he had been down to get some water. She walked down to the edge of the river. She saw some marks of bare feet, many of them. He must have taken a dip in the morning, she thought. What a clean wholesome kind of a man he was, even if his clothes were badly worn. It must have been very cold here early in the morning, and she leaned down and dipped her finger in the icy water. What a vigorous creature he must be, she thought, to get into that chilly water and before the sun was up too!

After this she walked back to her camp. Under the near-by spruces she saw his pile of belongings. She went over to them. There was his campfire of last night. She looked around and wondered where he had slept. She saw no sign of any bed. His roll of blankets was thrown under a bush. Perhaps he had packed them up before

he left. Then she noticed that the rope around them was still covered with the mud and a great daub of it had hardened on the knot. For a long time she pondered over this. She wondered if he hadn't been to bed at all. Near by was his dunnage bag. It stood open. She had a vague curiosity to look at his things, but Zing was watching her and she felt ashamed of herself. In the top of the bag was a book with a wet and crumpled cover. She picked it up. It was Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*. She opened the pages casually. Many passages were marked. On the fly-page was writing. She shut it quickly and put it back in the bag. It was beneath her to spy on his things, she told herself, and went back and sat in front of her tent. A little voice kept whispering to her, "Probably you could find out his real name if you looked in that cover." She told herself that it made no difference to her. Once she did actually get up and go back, but she was too nice a girl really to do anything of the kind.

The sun was getting lower. She began to feel very anxious and decided she would take a walk. Probably when she returned she would find him there by the tent getting something to eat. She was gone for an hour. She walked very rapidly the last part of the way back. There was no sign of him.

Finally the sun set.

She was very much worried, and she began to feel a little angry. He should have known that she would be afraid, not for him of course, but without him she was helpless. Now she began to think that perhaps he was hurt. Lots of things could happen to a man in the mountains. She had never experienced such a long day. She walked about the camp, then down to the river. At last a species of panic began to creep over her. Suddenly she thought she heard a sound. She listened long and intently. Only the slush and slop of the river answered her. She got up again; she felt sure she heard a sound. She listened, and this time, a long way off, she heard a faint shout. She put her hand to her breast. Then laughed a little and sat down on the log.

She was intensely relieved.

Now that he was coming she felt how silly her fears had been. She should have known he would come back before dark and she felt ashamed of her weakness. His voice sounded louder now. He was calling to the horses. She could even hear the sounds of their feet on the trail. They must be very near. In a minute she saw the first one only a few hundred yards away. He trotted out of the brush and stopped to graze. A second later two others ambled out. Her heart beat a little quickly. She wondered where

the man was. In a few moments he came riding at a gallop out of the brush a hundred yards from where the others had emerged. He was riding barebacked a small white horse and chasing a black one. He drove them up near the camp, and then rode up to the big spruce where the girl had first stood to get protection from the rain. He had made a rough bridle out of a bit of rope. He slid off the white horse and slipped the halter. Then he walked slowly over to the fire. She heard his step approaching, but did not look up until he spoke in his low calm voice—

"I hope you have not been lonely."

She had meant to give him a cordial greeting, but she only said indifferently, "Oh, no, not in the least."

Then she looked up.

"Why what's the matter?" she said, all other thoughts going out of her mind. His face was grey and haggard. Had he been looking at her he would have seen the sympathetic tenderness that had suddenly kindled in her grey eyes. But he was pushing a log into the fire with his boot.

"Nothing," he said; "why?" and he smiled that kindly smile of his that she liked so much.

"You look so tired," she said in a low voice. "I thought perhaps you had hurt yourself or—or something." She thought that he was very

cold, and it hurt her feelings a little. Her tone was kindly, but when he looked up she had turned back to her tent.

"I'm just tired," he said in a voice that vindicated his words. "Nothing more. You see, I've covered somewhere between thirty and forty miles since I left here this morning, and half of it on foot, and then you see I missed lunch too." He spoke perfectly casually, just as though it was an every-day occurrence, which indeed it frequently was. Then he went on in his matter-of-fact way.

"I don't know as I've ever known the horses to wander so far from here before. There's good feed here. Still, I have been gone six weeks." He paused and then continued, "However, I'll get us a bite to eat now, as soon as I can wash up;" and with small sign of weariness in his gait he went down to the river to wash.

Miss Dick looked at him. As she stood there in the tent door, she was a picture that might have stirred any man's heart, let alone this particular creature of the woods and cañons who knew nothing of women. Her hat was off, and she seemed very slim and girlish as she watched him disappear down the bank to the river. Her mouth was open just a little, and her face faintly flushed, while her grey eyes looked very kindly after the retreating figure.

"Now I wonder," she said gently to herself with one little finger pulling down one small red lower lip—"now I wonder just what makes him look so badly?" She paused, and then murmured to herself: "I don't believe he went to bed at all last night. Now I wonder why?"

Perhaps she guessed, and perhaps she didn't. Who is there that can even make a hazard at what a girl does really think? Still, she did not look displeased as she sat down on the log and, with her small chin in her hands, looked long and steadily into the fire.

CHAPTER XIV

THE next day there began quite a different life for them, for now they were to leave the Big River for good and make with the horses the four hundred miles that lay between them and the railroad. The girl had always thought of this man as peculiarly of the river and rapids. Somehow she never associated him with any other environment, and so she stood in the door of the tent next morning and watched with much interest as he packed up for the first day on the trail. He had everything ready except her tent and bedding when she came out to breakfast. The horses stood about under the trees with saddles on, ready to be packed, with heads drooping and lower lips wobbling contentedly.

"You will ride my little white horse," he told her, as he poured out her coffee; "he's the finest, gentlest, cleverest cayuse in the mountains, and I'm sure you will like him. I've put on my big saddle too, and I think you will find it pretty comfortable. Fortunately I had an old saddle here in my cache. It's been here for

two years, but barring being gnawed by the mountain rats, it's as good as ever."

He had already had his breakfast before she came out, and while she was finishing hers, he tightened up the cinches preparatory to packing up.

"Can I have your tent now?" he asked at last, and when she nodded her head he slipped the guys and let it come down with a flutter of white canvas.

"Can't I help you?" she asked, when she had finished.

"Thanks; please come over here, and I'll teach you how to pack a tent;" and very slowly he showed her how to stretch it out on the ground and fold it so that it would go nicely on a horse.

"Now," he said, with just a shadow of a smile, "I'll show you how to throw the 'diamond hitch.' Of course I don't expect you to do it alone, but if you will take the off side and pull when I tell you to, you will help me a lot." And then he explained to her the system of loops and twists that comprise the famous hitch for fastening packs on horses.

When all were packed he stepped back and surveyed the packs critically.

"I wish we had about two more horses," he said, "we're really packed too heavy. However, it can't be helped You haven't left any-

thing, have you ? " So far he had scarcely looked at her, but had kept up a running fire of conversation. When he did he found her grey eyes watching him curiously. She gave him a sweet smile as she shook her head. She thought she had displeased him in some way or other the day before, and she wanted to be as nice as possible. After she had retired it had occurred to her that she might have had something cooked the night before when he had come in so tired. Perhaps he thought her selfish. But, she was going to try to please him to-day, she said to herself, and she had listened with the most serious face to everything he had told her about the packs. Probably he thought her perfectly useless and incompetent, but she was going to prove to him that she wasn't.

"If you are all ready, we might mount," he said briskly. Then he paused, and looked at her a little blankly. "Your dress," he said; "can you ride in it ? "

She laughed a little.

"Oh yes," she answered lightly, "it's really a divided skirt. I've had it buttoned up differently before, so you wouldn't notice it;" and with an easy movement she swung into the saddle, stooping quickly to adjust the skirt.

Smith looked at her with undisguised satisfaction.

"Evidently you're used to horses," he said approvingly.

"Yes, a little," she said, colouring with pleasure that he had noticed how easily she mounted and how at home she was in the saddle. As a matter of fact she was a splendid horsewoman and felt unlimited confidence on a horse, which was more than she did in the canoe.

Smith was tying his rifle under one side of his saddle. When he had it in place he picked up the axe and, having unfastened the packhorses, he took his own by the bridle rein and struck off through the opening toward the mountain wall. One by one the horses fell in behind.

"You had better bring up the rear," he called to her over his shoulder. "Please watch the packs and let me know if anything works loose;" and he swung into the saddle.

In a few minutes they struck the faint ribbon of the trail.

"Here she is," he called back; "now we're off at last for the long stretch;" and he turned again in his saddle, and she saw him light his pipe, and the little puffs of smoke floating back on the still air.

The trail from the cache headed East from here, and entered a great pass in the mountains. The first part of it ran along the rim of the Big River, but after an hour the stream forked, and

the trail swung off a little to the North, following up the smaller of the two branches, which now had become a narrower but more rampant bit of water.

In many places the trail wound along the banks just above it, and as Miss Dick looked down from her horse, she kept wondering just how far a canoe could travel in this water. She didn't think it could be done at all, but perhaps the man ahead might do it. She found that she had the most unlimited confidence in what he could do.

After two hours on the trail she could see the defile that lay like a great cross valley in the main range of the mountains and away in the distance loomed up the huge snowcaps that stood like guardians both to the North and the South of the way that they must go these next days. The trail had been travelled but a few weeks before by her own outfit and the bad places had been cut out, so there were no delays, save once or twice when Smith came back to fix a pack on one of the horses. About noon he stopped as they were passing through a little clearing and waited for her to come up. His blue eyes looked at her solicitously, as he asked:

"Are you getting tired?"

She shook her head.

"All right then," he replied, "we will push right on to the Little Fork, where there is good

horse-feed and a nice camp ground, and we will only make just this one drive to-day. Is that all right ? " and he raised his eyebrows to see if she approved.

Of course she did. In fact, she found that she was approving of this man altogether faster than she liked. All the rest of the day she was turning over in her mind ways and means of making herself useful. When they finally pulled into the little camp ground among the firs by the turbulent Little Fork she did not wait at all for the man. Without a word from him she unsaddled her horse and turned him loose, and when Smith had the others unsaddled she actually had the fire started. He looked at her with a pleased smile when he saw the smoke coming up from the rather unscientific smudge that she had well under way.

He was rather quiet during the meal which they had prepared together, but the girl kept up a steady conversation. Smith watched her narrowly. Somehow she seemed more charming to-day than ever before, and he sighed heavily once or twice.

It was a little after four o'clock when they finished their lunch, and for a few minutes he lay on the grass smoking his pipe. Suddenly he knocked out the ashes and got upon his feet. She looked up inquiringly.

"I'm going to put up your tent," he said in response to her unspoken query. "You look a little tired, and perhaps it might freshen you up to have a little rest;" and without another word he set to work.

It hadn't occurred to her yet that she could help in pitching the tent, so she sat quietly watching him. How thoughtful and kind he was, she mused, for she was very tired and a little sleepy. She took off her hat and studied the texture of it very carefully; still, if you had asked her she couldn't have given you any information about it. When the tent was ready and the nest of branches laid she went in. He pulled aside the flap and smiled as she entered. She stopped just a second and looked at him.

"You're so good to me," she said, with a little smile which just showed her white teeth.

When he had gone she stretched herself on the boughs and for a few minutes lay looking wide-eyed at the canvas top. She had never known any one quite like him, she said to herself, and then, with a contented little stretch, she shut her eyes and fell fast asleep.

Smith sat looking into the smouldering fire, and then it occurred to him that he would never have a better time to shave and clean up. He opened the extra bundle of stuff that he had taken from his cache on the Big River. It contained

a couple of clean shirts, a new pair of trousers and his shaving effects, including a small mirror. He boiled some water first. Then he slapped his axe sideways into a near-by tree and carefully placed the mirror on the side of the blade where it rested against the trunk as though on a shelf. He glanced at himself in the mirror. He looked very unkempt and disgracefully brown. After he had shaved he went down to the river and took a bath and then put on clean clothes throughout. He felt much more respectable when he came back to the camp. He looked over at the tent. The flap was still down. He thought the girl must be asleep. He was restless, and so, after sitting on the log a few minutes, he picked up his rifle and wandered off up the trail. He had himself well in hand now, he thought.

The day he had hunted horses—was it only yesterday?—had been the bad time. But he had fought it all out in his own mind. It was perfect madness for him to think of this girl. He had carefully considered all that he was, and all that he represented. He might make money in time; in fact, he felt quite sure that he would make a lot out of his gold claims. But it wasn't the money side that he cared for, nor yet was it his position. He knew well enough that with money he could quickly establish

whatever position he wanted, but what worried him was himself. He felt that he had become a crude, rough creature. His seven years had made him primitive and uncultured. If he had not been so thoroughly taken off his feet by this new emotion that had struck him, he might not have thought so poorly of himself. He tried to place himself in the very best light possible, but always it seemed utterly inadequate. This girl, he kept thinking, could have any man in the world that she wanted. He could not imagine any man knowing her and not wanting her just as madly and irrevocably as did he. It was absolutely inconceivable that she could ever see anything in him save a good companionable creature who had come to her rescue in the wilderness. She was kind, he thought, but that was because she was naturally good, and he imagined her disgust if she ever suspected what was in his mind. He wished that he might have met her under other circumstances when he had money and position. Even then he felt it would be a hard task to win her, but he would not have been so handicapped as now. Meeting her as he was, dirty, unkempt and ragged, he would always appear to her as an inferior, and if later he met her under other circumstances, it would still be as the trapper and rough prospector that she would class him. This seemed

to him to be an insuperable stumbling-block between them.

But barring these things, what had he to offer such a girl? He could follow a trail, chop wood, stalk game and handle a canoe in bad water, and he sneered bitterly at himself. What sort of an offering was that to make to a woman like this, who was refined, delicate and cultured? And yet, in the back of his head there was not the vaguest idea of giving her up without an effort, though when he considered what he should do about it, his sober judgment told him that his case was a poor one But he was not one to spend hours in thinking and then reach no conclusion. The result of all his cogitation then was this: that he would smother everything that he felt as long as they were alone here in the wilderness. When he had safely guided her out of the wilds, and she was with her family, then he would do as seemed best. But for these next weeks, he should be simply the guide, packer and rough character that she naturally supposed him to be.

Once or twice it occurred to him as somewhat strange that he did not know her last name, but he did not feel the slightest curiosity about it. Perhaps sometime she would tell him. It wasn't her name, or her position in society that stood between them in his mind.

He cared not a rap for any of these. What did make him despair was the difference between them, just as a man and a woman. She was finer, he told himself, in every fibre than he. His life had coarsened him, he thought. It seemed almost a sacrilege to even think of himself as worthy of her. Had the man had a better perspective perhaps he might have realized that the simple primitive virtues of which he was the embodiment made him in reality the equal of any woman. Still, had he realized this he would not have been the kind of man that he was.

He wandered about on the trail for an hour before he came back to the camp. He could see from a distance that the tent flaps were open, and a moment later he saw the trim little figure of the girl sitting on the grass before the fire. She had just put on more wood and was watching with fascination to see whether or not it was going to burn. She looked up as she heard his footsteps and instantly jumped to her feet.

A look of surprise and a little apprehension crossed her face.

He could not understand it. He quickened his pace. The girl stood stiffly watching him.

"Is anything wrong?" he asked, when he was still fifty feet away. For a second she looked at him, and then a little wave of colour

swept over her face. She turned around quickly and sat down on the log.

"Why, what's the matter?" he asked solicitously.

She did not look up, but answered in a very subdued voice.

"It seems so silly," she said, "I was frightened. I didn't recognize you at all. I thought it was a strange man. It's the beard, you know—and the clothes;" and she stopped for a second and went on, "You look so different. I couldn't imagine that they would make such a change;" and she got up rather abruptly and went into her tent.

Smith stood stupidly looking after her. He had forgotten that he had shaved. He didn't suppose it would make so much difference one way or the other. He walked over to the tree where his little mirror was stuck up and carefully looked at his face. He looked cleaner, of course, but then he did not see such a very great change, and without thinking any more of it, he set about baking some bread for the next day.

Miss Dick sat down on her bed, and without knowing just why began to unlace her big boots; she had an idea she would put on her slippers. She took off one shoe and sat for a long time nursing her little foot with both hands. There was a very strange expression on her face. If

the man had seen her he would have said she looked unusually sweet and winsome.

As for the girl she did not know exactly what she did feel. Probably girls don't know themselves any better than anybody else does. As a matter of fact, she didn't question herself. She was thinking what a wonderfully strong, firm mouth the man had, and wondering why she had not noticed it before even with the beard. It had such a sympathetic little droop at the corners. His face now made quite a different impression on her. She wondered how a man could look so strong and masterful and yet at the same time have such a kindly expression. The clean clothes seemed to make some difference, too. He looked like a gentleman; there was no question about that, and then a little wave of resentment passed over her. What was a gentleman? she asked herself. This man was refined, delicate, wholesome and, well—he was very nice.

She felt for perhaps the first time in her life that there were things in men and women infinitely superior to the nomenclature that a conventional world places upon them. She found herself once more comparing this man with Jack Harrison, the son of the trust magnate. This time Jack made but a poor showing. Her little lower lip stuck out just a shade as the

picture of the much admired Jack, as she had last seen him, crossed her mind. It had been at an afternoon tea in the spring, up in one of the big Fifth Avenue houses that face the Park. He wore a frockcoat that fitted him with the perfection of a debutante's gown. In his lapel was a white Gardenia. She remembered that he had put her in her carriage, and that he had held in his left hand a silk hat that actually shone in the sun. She had thought then that he looked very smart—now, well, the comparison between the man who was outside baking bread and the New York society and Club man was distinctly in favour of the former.

She felt within her a growing question as to what things in men were really desirable. She did not dwell on it very much just then, but it was a thought that was to come back to her many and many a time during the next days and weeks when they were on the trail. She felt as though the relations between them had been suddenly altered. A screen seemed to have been withdrawn. She saw things in an entirely different light from that in which she had seen them before. How had she ever mistaken such a man for a mere servant? Even in the firelight that first night she might have seen by his bearing that he was no common man. She tried to justify her behaviour by thinking of her

worry and her anxiety to get her friend down the river to medical assistance. Somehow the excuse did not seem adequate to her. He, she recalled, had shown himself much better bred than she had. Then she found herself wondering what he must think of her. To a man of his refinement and gentleness she must have seemed impossible. Then, after that, she had shown herself trifling and petty. He had come back to help them as a matter of course. Knowing him, as she did now, she realized that he would do that and what he was doing now, all of it, the fires, the beds, and the thousand little attentions for any woman in a position such as hers. She found that she was conducting an inventory of herself such as she had never done before. She had always been admired and petted since she was a child. When she came out the newspapers had printed reams about her gowns and social doings, and a dozen men had wanted to marry her. She remembered that she was always spoken of as an heiress and a great catch, and then she began to wonder how much of the attentions paid her had been on account of her father's position and wealth.

If she could have seen herself as she looked at just this moment, she might have dismissed this last thought.

But she went steadily on now, weighing

everything, good and bad alike. In New York, she told herself, there were so many artificial values. She was judged there by her dresses, her position, by her ability to entertain a dinner partner, and by her success at the thousand trifles which go to make a girl popular in sets where people devote their entire lives to amusing themselves and each other. Out here it was different. Even now she could hear the rush of the waters beside which they camped. Around them stood the giant mountains, mantled in snow, serene and grand against the sky. Great rivers, snow clad passes, vast forests and miles of lonely trail lay between her and all that she had erstwhile esteemed so important. What did it amount to here, that she looked well in evening dress or that she had turned down the attentions of a lot of vapid young men who wore tailor-made clothes of the greatest perfection and were adepts at turning polite phrases? None of them, she thought, and this time with great definiteness, were in the same class as this vigorous, self-reliant and utterly dependable man whom she had tried to pay a salary to only a week before.

She was still holding the little foot in her hands when Smith called her. "Supper's ready," he said in his calm low voice. He had stopped calling her Miss Dick. He couldn't bring himself

to do it any more. He thought it must be a nickname. It didn't suit her at all. If he knew her last name he would address her by it, and then he felt a very sudden wish that he knew her first name. He hoped it was Mary or Alice, or some other distinctively feminine name. This girl to him seemed the very essence of her sex, womanly yet girlish, and with that subtle charm which femininity wraps around the personality of a maid just emerging into full womanhood.

He had spread the supper on a pack-cover when she came out and was waiting for her to sit down before he began. The girl felt somewhat conscious. The man only thought that she was unusually quiet, for whereas she had talked so brightly and continuously at the afternoon meal, she barely made a comment now. He looked at her guardedly several times. He could not understand it at all. When at last she got up with a formal little "Good-night" and went into her tent, he pondered a long time. He wondered if he had done anything to offend her. He could think of nothing. Men in love are just plain stupid.

CHAPTER XV

IT was ten days after when, late one afternoon, the little pack-train came dragging out of the Eastern end of the Great Pass, and the travellers went into camp on a flat just above another great river which came pouring in from the South, where it had been born and bred among the icy crags on the very roof of the mountains that crown the continental divide to the South.

Any one who saw them making their camp now might have noticed quite a difference in the girl. She had not thought of her veil of late and her face was much browner, but her cheeks were tinted with the glow of perfect health. She was still neat and clean, but her dress was no longer as fresh as it had been, and if one looked closely one might have seen where two great rips had been patched in it. She had torn it twice in one day while they were going through a bit of burned timber near the continental summit. She knew nothing of sewing, but she had let the man have it one night and long

after she was asleep he had sat by his campfire working on it. It had seemed incredible to her that such big strong hands could do so neat a job, when she had found the skirt just inside the tent in the morning.

They had made fairly good time in spite of the fact that they had camped for two days near a beautiful lake because of wet weather. Smith had insisted on this and the girl had not thought of resisting.

They had become much better acquainted with each other, these two, in the last days. It is not a very long space of time, ten days, back in civilization, but out in the mountains, hundreds of miles from any one, people get to know each other with astonishing rapidity and thoroughness.

Besides, two of those days had been spent in camp when Smith had sat much of the day just at the edge of her tent and talked to her. Each day they would put in on the trail anywhere from five to eight hours, depending on the distance between good camp grounds and places where there was feed for the horses. Often they camped early in the afternoon, for the man made a practice of starting as early in the morning as possible. So there had been many hours daily when the two had sat together around the fire and talked.

They were getting to know each other's minds now, though both had evaded personalities. The girl's self consciousness had worn off to a certain extent, but she still felt strangely diffident with this man, and she found that much of her time when she was riding behind the string of horses on the trail was given over to thinking about him. She always looked forward now to the camping time and found that she felt very glad in a quiet kind of way when he would swing off his horse and call back to her in cordial tones, "I guess we'll camp here, if it suits you." She found too that she liked to watch him working about the camp, making the fire and doing the hundred other tasks that he went through with each day. Most of all she had come to look forward to the evenings when the tent was up and the dishes washed and they both sat beside the great fires which he invariably built. She had been voted a success in society because of her ability to draw people out and make them talk. She remembered it once or twice on this trip, and laughed a little contemptuously as she thought of how much she had prided herself on her ability to entertain stupid young millionaires. Now she set herself very carefully and with her greatest skill to draw out this man of the woods. In a measure she had been rewarded, for he did talk with her for hours on end,

but never much of himself, and not once of his past or why he was in the mountains.

What he did tell her, held her enthralled with wonder and the keenest interest. He made her feel the life of the mountains and the fascination of the great unknown country up North, unknown to the world, but an open book to this wayfarer in the wilds who had camped time and again by its unnamed rivers and beneath the peaks unchristened. Then too he told her of the game, and made her feel all the interest of stalking the mountain sheep among the crags, or yet again of how he used to trap the grizzlies or trail the moose through the forest. He explained to her about the rivers, where they headed, and which way they ran. He told her of the vast desolation of the barren lands where he had spent a year and how one had to carry one's own wood to certain parts of it so shorn was it of vegetation.

Then he would dwell on the mystery of the mountains and that subtle consciousness of God which it engenders, and at last he came to talk with her of his half-expressed ideals which, born in the simplicity of his surroundings, had been nourished by a clean and hardy life in the open. Not the concrete ideals, did he talk of but of the abstractions. Of making money, winning high position and such-like he never spoke. His

ideals rather were all as to men and character, and what things in life were true and good, and what false and without value. Sometimes he would talk along for an hour in a dreamy kind of way, putting into words for the first time ideas and instincts that all these years had been germinating under the stars, attuned to the roar of the great rivers and the murmur of the winds in the lonely treetops. At such times the girl would listen to him with her small red lips apart and her great grey eyes wide open at the wonder and the mystery of it all. She found that he was wise in other things beside his own life.

One clear night when the stars were shining brightly and the Northern lights flashed across the sky, he had told her about the stars and had pointed out the great Bear and the other constellations, and told her of how men in the wilds guided themselves by the stars. Then he explained to her about Saturn and its rings, and the distant planets, and much more about astronomy and the great discoveries that had just been made by the use of the great Lick Observatory, and then he had drifted off into vague talk of the infinite. "I never really began to think until I came out here," he told her. "Before that, this world of ours and even my own little petty affairs, seemed to me to be of the greatest

importance, the beginning and end of the universe. But lying out here nights all by myself and looking up at the stars made me realize just how trifling a bit of the whole scheme our planet is, not to speak of ourselves."

He paused and for a few minutes puffed on his pipe. The silence was unbroken save for the murmur of running water in a near-by brook and the sudden collapse of a log in the camp fire. The girl watched him and waited for him to continue. She knew nothing about the stars except that there were a lot of them. After a bit he began again, "It is a good thing to think about the universe when your troubles and worries begin to get the better of you," and he smiled quietly as he let his eyes rest on the face of the girl.

"Yes," she said with a rising inflection in her voice. She wondered why it should help. The man leaned against the stump behind him and his eyes studied the firmament above.

"There is old Mizar, up there," he went on as though talking to himself, "that middle star in the tail of the Great Bear. Now we down here think quite a lot about our sun. Mizar is more than forty times its size. But even that is a tiny bit of matter compared with some of the others. Take for instance Alpha Centauri. It is two hundred thousand times as far

away from us as the sun is, and that is ninety-three million miles distant. Did you ever stop to think just how far away that really is?" and his eyes came down from the heavens and sought hers as he asked the question.

The girl stirred uneasily.

"No," she said, "I'm afraid there are lots of things I never even heard about, much less have thought of. I cannot conceive of such distances at all."

"Look at it this way," the man went on, "and then you will begin to get some little idea of the immensity of space. Electricity travels about one hundred and eighty thousand miles a second. If one had a cable around the world in a continuous circuit a message would make the trip seven times while your watch is ticking once. At that rate it would take a message eight minutes to get to the sun, but to reach Alpha Centauri it would take three years, and as this is the nearest of the fixed stars you can imagine how far away some of the others are. Many are set so far in the infinite that if their light had gone out when Christ was born they would still be shining for us, and even for our children's children."

He paused and after refilling his pipe continued—

"It is only when we think of such distances

and vastness that we begin to realize what a trifle in the universe our own world is. When I'm feeling a bit down in the mouth I think about it and figure just how important my own troubles are and exactly what difference it makes about them anyway."

He stopped for a minute or two and presently resumed:

"Most of us," he said, "place too much importance on our own affairs. It is absurd when you come to think about it. Back there in New York and London and the big cities they are sweating and fuming and lying awake nights over a few things we call dollars or pounds, or by some other name that stands for pieces of metal that give the bearer the right to have things he needs or wants and which are denied to others who perhaps need them worse. If we can gather large quantities of these, millions and millions perhaps, then,—we are great in the eyes of the world and in accordance with such greatness are we given a place in the social strata. We come to form a different class above and beyond those poor creatures who have not these little pieces of silver or gold. So we look down upon them. They are our servants, creatures whom we look upon as we do our horses or our dogs,"—he stopped suddenly for he had forgotten himself entirely.

He recalled that not three weeks ago this very girl had considered him in the light of a servant. He looked at her and found her eyes fixed upon him. He thought they were shining strangely, but perhaps it was the firelight. Before he could decide she got up rather abruptly and went to her tent. He was afraid lest he had offended her.

But he hadn't. On the contrary she was thinking him the most unusual man she had ever met and was experiencing something new and very strange, something she had never felt before; a little subtle tugging in her breast, as though her heart was held in a fine network of threads and some unseen hand was drawing on it until there was a little pressure from all sides.

Another night he had talked to her of books, and if she had been surprised at his conversation on astronomy she was more amazed to hear him casually outlining a criticism of Schopenhauer of whom she barely knew anything except that he had horrid ideas about women. This, it developed, was why this man didn't like the philosopher, for it seemed that he had very high ideals about women, as he had about other things.

"We were talking of the immensity of the universe the other night," he said quite casually, "but you went to bed before I really had finished

what was in my mind. In spite of all the vastness and immensity of the solar system, there is yet something in the spirit of a single man that makes him a match and more for all this bulk of soulless matter. I think Emerson hits it off when he says, 'A single drop of manly blood the surging sea outweighs.'"

He paused.

"How about poor little women?" she said in an almost inaudible voice.

For a long time he looked into the fire, so long that she feared he was not going to answer at all.

At last in a very low voice he said—

"Ah! Yes, women. Well, if man is in tune with the infinite, woman is with the Divine. A little child and a pure woman are the embodiment of all that is sweetest and best that the world affords. It is women that hold men true; it is women that give us the mould from which our ideals are cast; it is women that keep the spiritual in the man from crumbling into the dust of the material. Their responsibility is great indeed, for in their small hands lies the salvation of all the race; it is for them to make or mar men, to raise them to the heights where God intended they should stand, or let them fall into the eddies and dead waters of life, where the priceless boon of life spins around

and around like chips in one of these great rivers we know so well."

He paused, he had not meant to get so carried away with his theme. Her eyes were fixed on him with that same new light, but he did not see it. He was looking into the fire.

"But some women, you know," she said, "they aren't good and strong and big, and they aren't the inspiration that you talk about. They aren't at all," and her voice trembled a little.

But he did not notice it. He was thinking about what she had said and at last he answered:

"Yes, that's true too. Some women aren't good or true or desirable. But it is like the valleys and the peaks out here in our mountains. The deeper the valleys, the higher seem the pinnacles of the mountains above them. It's so with women. There are bad women, of course, but they only emphasize the beauty and purity and near divinity of the good ones. I don't know women very well" he paused; "at least, I've seen few these last years, but I have an idea that every girl child is born naturally better than the boy babies, and that the infinite power that guides us intended all women to grow up pure and unsullied and an inspiration to us crude, coarse men." And he lapsed into a profound silence.

Suddenly he got up.

"I'm going out to look at the horses," he said, and without another word left her sitting by the fire with the dog.

What must such a man think of her, she wondered to herself. Had she ever been an inspiration to any one? On the contrary, she remembered that she was an object of fear and she suspected dislike, to all of the great staff of servants that it took to run her father's enormous establishment in town, not to speak of the country place, the private car and the yacht. She had always been overbearing and selfish to all the servants, she knew. In fact she couldn't remember ever having thought of them save as incompetent, or impertinent, or in some way unsatisfactory. Still, there were others besides servants. Perhaps she had inspired some one else. She tried to recall having influenced any one. There were all the men she knew and in her mind she ran them over. She could not remember one of them talking of women as did this man. She recalled a lot of silly things that had been said to her. Perhaps these men she knew thought their ideals might bore her or much more probably they did not have any at all. She remembered that young Harrison, who had always seemed the most likeable, had gotten into some sort of a scrape with some girl "not in society," and that he had been

hustled off to spend the winter abroad two years before.

No, she was quite sure that she had inspired none of them and that none of them wanted to be inspired. She thought they were mostly cynical about women, the men she knew at home. Not in the least like this man out here. How different life would be if more men felt as this particular one did! She thought that if any one should ever put her on such a pinnacle it might make a great difference. She told herself that her life was all wrong, and that her conceptions of it had been false. This man, this simple creature upon whom she had presumed to look down, had taught her more in three weeks than all the other men she had met in her whole life.

When he came back she had gone to bed, and the little net around her heart was pulling just a little tighter. She did not want to think about just what it meant. It was impossible, incredible that she should come to feel—but she put it out of her mind. She didn't have to think of it to-night at least, but her face was a little flushed when she crawled into her blankets and she felt curiously happy.

But we have gone far afield from the flat on the river that flowed to the North where the man and the woman were making their camp

on that particular "tenth day after." Miss Dick had become much more proficient in the ways of camp life, and she helped Smith unpack, and while he lifted off the heavy packs she rolled up the cinch ropes and laid them in a neat pile under the trees. She knew how to start a fire very successfully now, and once when it had been on the point of raining she had, unknown to the man, cut poles for the tents. She was learning to chop wood, in a rather feminine way, to be sure, but if she had the time she could hack at it until it fell. She never remembered having felt so well and so strong and so hungry as she did these days. Besides this she knew how to cook over the campfire, and she began to feel very competent and self reliant, and always somewhere in her consciousness was the wish, a wish that was growing every day, faster than she realized, that the man might watch her and approve of what she did and how she did it.

The country where they were camped now was much more open, and the vegetation was not nearly as dense as it had been on the other side of the main range.

"To-morrow," said the man, "we'll raft this river, and if we have time make a short drive. It is the first week in September, and we have three hundred miles to cover yet. There's a pass south of here about a week's travel

that we have to get over before much snow falls. Of course we have lots of good weather yet in the valleys, but it's apt to be squally on the passes and a little snow makes it pretty hard for the horses. I've two more cayuses in a small park across the river, and we can pick them up as we pull through. I don't think I'll have any trouble in finding them, for it's a small place and easy hunting them. After we get over the high pass we won't have to bother about anything else. The rivers will be low, and we can sail right through to the railroad." He stopped. "A month from now," he said, "you ought to be in New York."

The girl looked up at him. But he had turned his back and was staring down at the great river that flowed smooth as oil below him.

She felt a little catch in her throat.

"Won't you be glad when we get to the railroad?" she asked a little unsteadily.

If he had seen her as she asked him this, he might have felt differently about his chances. But he didn't see her and answered, as she thought, rather coldly:

"I'll be glad when you are safely out of this desolation, and of course, too, I'll be happy in the thought of your being happy at getting home once more."

He seemed to the girl to be very indifferent

about it all. Probably he would be glad to get rid of her. It was not likely that he could see anything in her, and when she went to bed that night she felt a very definite agitation, for she tried no longer to conceal from herself that she was beginning to care a great deal what this quiet, blue-eyed man thought about her.

CHAPTER XVI

THE next day it rained. Smith was up earlier than usual and he found that there were no convenient big spruces here to afford him shelter, and he had from the start been giving the canvas fly to the girl to go under her blankets. It had rained only a few nights since they had been together, and it had so happened that on each of these occasions they had been camped in the heavy timber where he had been able to make a nest for himself where the wet bothered him but little. Over here, however, it was different. There were trees, to be sure, but they gave no such protection as he had had before. Still it was no great hardship for him to sleep out in the wet. He had done it many and many a time, and when long before daylight he heard the drops falling, and then began to feel them on his blankets, he only pulled himself closer together. He got a sort of consolation out of the feeling that he was making a sacrifice for this girl, even though she herself did not realize it.

By daylight he was cold and damp and so had turned out and built a roaring big fire.

As soon as Miss Dick was awake and realized that it was raining she looked out of her own snug little tent. The familiar figure was standing in front of the fire. He was very wet, but seemed perfectly complacent.

"Hello," he said, "breakfast is most ready. I guess you'd better have it in the tent."

As soon as she was dressed she threw back the flaps and invited him in. She was a little puzzled when she saw how damp he was. She thought about it all the time she was eating breakfast. At last she asked:

"Where did you sleep last night?" She was not a stupid girl and in five minutes she had run down the truth. She wondered if any man she knew back in New York would sleep out in the rain in order that some woman might have his shelter to put beneath her bed just as a little auxiliary comfort, and then go to great pains to conceal it. He was a good deal embarrassed, and while she was examining him he stood looking into the fire. Finally he agreed not to do it again. It was a pity he did not look at her just then, for her grey eyes were very big and very soft and very deep as she watched him. She was glad that there could be such big, generous, kindly men in the world and more than ever

before did she wish that she might seem less futile in his eyes.

When he suggested that they should camp that day she readily acquiesced. She had come to like the days when they were quietly in the tent, for then it was that he seemed to her more natural and less restrained. Perhaps this was because on these days he made an unusual effort to amuse and entertain her and in so doing was less conscious of himself. But to-day he disappeared immediately after breakfast, and when he came back it was almost noon. She had been very lonely and for two hours had been wondering what had become of him. He had been building a raft, he told her, when he came in at length. It was quite completed, and if the rain stopped they could cross the river any time. Late that afternoon it eased up and finally stopped entirely. He took her over on his first trip. It was a sturdy craft, built of five logs, bound together by cross-pieces let into the main logs and the whole tightly held by pack ropes. Two rough oars which he had fashioned with his axe made it possible for him to guide it.

After he had landed her in a little wooded place on the further shore he returned for the outfit which was to comprise his second cargo, but before he cast off he put the horses in the river.

For a few minutes they hesitated to take the current, but at last the first one stepped off into the channel, and in a few minutes the whole five were swimming with might and main, noses pointed diagonally upstream, so that the river, added to their own efforts, carried them quickly across. They landed a little below where the girl sat on a rock by the edge of the river watching the proceedings. On the other side she could see the man piling up the raft with the outfit, and at last saw him cast off and then watched him tugging at the rough oars. How powerful he was, she thought, as she saw the great energy that he put into his efforts, and how quickly it brought him to her side of the river.

In another hour they were in camp with everything cosy and comfortable. The sun had come out just in time for them to see it set in a glory of crimson and gold. Smith was kneeling beside the camp-fire. The girl was standing near the bank of the river, which, with its incessant rippling and murmuring, was sliding past. There was a little wind, and her tie and her skirt were blown by the breeze, revealing just the suggestion of her trim firm little figure. She held her hat in her hand and a dozen strands of her hair were blowing about her neck and cheeks. The air was crisp and cool after the rain of the morning and she drank it in with long breaths. Smith

looked up at her and thought he had never seen a more beautiful picture than she presented standing thus, absolutely unconscious of his gaze.

She turned suddenly.

"Do you know," she said, "I'm coming to love your mountains too. They are so big and sane and wholesome." She walked slowly over to the fire and then continued, "They make me feel quite differently from the way I used to about—" she paused—"Oh well," she ended rather lamely, "about all sorts of things."

After the meal, when the man sat as usual in the door of her tent smoking his pipe, he recalled her remark. She was watching his profile and admiring the little rings of smoke that he blew out of his mouth, for the wind had gone down now and the air was very still. At last he began:

"You were saying that all this, the mountains and the rivers and the wilds, made you think, and it's true. It makes one think who has anything in him that is worth while. How can it be otherwise? Back in the big cities nobody has time to think about anything except the immediate necessities of life, or if they have them, then how to get luxuries, or perhaps more luxuries still. There's no perspective in the heat and turmoil of the dreadful life people lead these days. It's all money, position, or something with immediate tangible value. But out here

we are, you and I, alone with the creator of it all. Here it is just as it was made centuries ago. We can think of what it really is all about, this life of ours with the little trifling span of years."

He paused for a long time. Miss Dick said nothing. She hoped he would continue. She loved to hear him talk. But he said no more.

At last the girl said in a very soft voice as she looked intently at the tip of her shoe, "You think a lot, don't you?" and looked at him out of the corner of her eye.

He laughed a little as he answered, "Well, perhaps I do, but every one does in the wilds. Perhaps that's one of the reasons I'm here." She looked at him quickly. Was he going to talk of himself at last? But as he came no nearer to it that evening, she felt unwilling to urge him.

Smith had located and run in his two extra horses before Miss Dick was up the next day. He had had little difficulty in finding them.

"With two fresh horses we can pack lighter and travel longer and faster," he told her when she appeared. "Do you think you can stand longer hours on the trail?"

She was sipping slowly the coffee he had given her. It was too hot to drink quickly.

"Yes, of course," she said, "if you think it necessary."

Somehow she was not in such a hurry to have it all over with as he seemed to be.

So it was that for the next week they travelled much harder and much faster than they had done theretofore. He would be up at daylight (the days were growing shorter now) and have the horses tied up and ready to pack by the time she was dressed. They would put in four and sometimes five hours on the way that now led up the river they had rafted. At noon he would unpack the loads from the horses and get a hurried lunch and let the girl rest for an hour or two, and then once more they would be on their way until the sun began to get low in the west, when he would make the camp for the night. The going was not so good, for the other pack-train had gone out another route. But Smith knew this way and thought he could save time by taking the shorter trail, which made a considerable cut off, by going over a pass in the very heart of the Rockies.

Often now there would be fallen timber in the path, and he would dismount, and while his patient little horse nosed about for a bite of green, he, with his swift, sure blows, would cut through the log that blocked the way. At these times the girl would sit on her horse and watch him with fascination as he swung his axe with a skill and certainty that brought the chips

out in great pieces as large as plates. Often now they were eight, nine and, once or twice, ten hours on the trail, but, as the man would tell her every night, they were making great time, and would count off to her the number of remaining days that with luck lay between her and the railroad that should take her back to the life to which she was accustomed. They must hurry, he kept telling her, on account of the possibility of snow in the passes; but this was not the only reason why he was anxious to get in. He told himself each day that he could not stand this sort of thing much longer. This constant companionship with the girl was testing his self control almost beyond endurance.

There were times when he hardly dared to look at her, for he felt that he could not keep his feelings out of his eyes. Sometimes it seemed as though something within him would break and that his emotions would carry him away completely; that reserve would be swept aside and he would say things to her that she could never forgive. It would be cowardly, contemptible for him to take advantage of her isolation to make love to her, even if he could not refrain at some later time. When she was home, she would have protection, and he could do and say what he pleased without feel-

ing that he was taking an unfair advantage.

One night he had been all but carried away.

There had been a very long day on the trail, and they were delayed repeatedly by fallen timber. It was after dark when they had made their camp. After dinner Miss Dick had been sitting leaning against a tree. He had been off looking after his horses, and when he came back she was still sitting there with her chin in her hands staring into the fire. She seemed very tired and very sleepy. As she heard him approaching she looked up at him and smiled faintly. She appeared very forlorn and in some way pathetically young and helpless. He stopped short and for a second a wave of tenderness swept over him. Something outside himself seemed to seize him and for the fraction of a moment he felt that he was going to take her in his arms in spite of all his resolutions. Perhaps he would have, too, if he had waited, but he turned on his heel with a suddenness that surprised the girl.

"I think I'll hobble the bay mare," was all he said.

When he returned she was asleep.

This experience frightened him, for he was not sure of himself any more, and he redoubled his efforts at self-control with the result that he became more reserved and, as the girl thought,

very cold. She puzzled her head about it a good deal, but concluded that he was working too hard. His constant eagerness to hurry piqued her in a curious way. She thought that he was becoming bored with her companionship, and her pride resented it, and after a few days she, too, became a little cold, which, of course, the man did not fail to notice. Their relations became more formal, and only once in the next ten days was there anything of the personal that came up between them. The man brought that about.

With each day that he was with her he felt a growing desire to know what her first name was. He hated to think of her as "Dick," it was so unfeminine and so utterly unlike her. For a week he thought about it, hoping that something would prompt her to speak of herself and tell him who she was. He did not like to ask her, and so for days he said nothing, but at last the idea became a mania with him and he determined to find out. He would ask her flatly, and if she was offended he could not help it. So that night, while they were looking into the camp-fire, he said suddenly, and without any tactful preliminaries:

"Dick is a strange name for a girl," and then lapsed into silence.

The girl looked up at him sharply. She breathed a little quickly. Her woman's instinct

told her that they were on dangerous ground, for this was the most personal comment that he had ever made since she had known him. She felt very kindly toward him to-night. She wanted to seem cordial and say something that would please him, but instead of that she found her cold voice replying in a way that she had not intended at all:

"Oh, do you think so?"

He did not look up, for he felt that he had offended her, but something stubborn in him persisted. He had no finesse at all; he wanted to know this thing, and now that he had made up his mind, he was going to find out if he could.

"Yes," he said very bluntly, "I think it's a very strange name. Is it really your name?"

He did not look at her. He never did at the times when he should have. If he had at this moment he might have seen a little colour in her cheeks that was not merely the reflection of the fire, and he might have seen too a quick look from those grey eyes that he would not have soon forgotten.

She answered in a very low voice at last:

"No, that isn't my real name. I've always been called Dick because my father's name was Richard, and because I wasn't a boy. I'm an only child." She added this last as an afterthought.

She said no more, but though she pretended to be looking into the fire she was really studying his face from under her long lashes. It was hard and set. She could make nothing of it. He felt that he was on dangerous ground. He feared he might go too far. He sat in silence for a long time. He was waiting until he knew he had himself perfectly in hand.

Then in his low, calm voice he said—

"What is your name? Your first name? The other's immaterial."

He stopped. He felt he had been very crude and that he had managed this conversation about as stupidly as was possible. He sat perfectly still. He heard the girl moving nervously and then get up. He thought she was not going to answer at all. At last she did in a very low voice, so low that he could barely catch it.

"Mary," she said, and then, "Why, do you know it's after ten? I think I'll turn in;" and with a little swish of skirts she was gone.

The man never moved for nearly an hour, but kept murmuring over and over again to himself, "Mary."

He was very glad it was "Mary." It had been his own mother's name. He thought that he would rather it were that than any name in the world. He hoped he had not offended her,

but still he was glad that he knew. He wondered if she had thought it officious. She had gone into her tent suddenly. Probably she thought him familiar and that he was taking advantage of her being alone with him. No doubt she was afraid that he might begin to call her by her first name. Of course she might have refused to answer at all. But then he had asked her bluntly, and she would not want to hurt his feelings by a flat refusal. Anyway why shouldn't he ask? It was a natural question. Still if she hadn't been annoyed she wouldn't have left him and gone to bed.

He was really very stupid. Incredibly so, but then of course he really knew nothing about women.

He continued to ponder long and deeply. He would show her in the morning that he was not going to be familiar. If she had been offended to-night that would reassure her. He would be very formal for the next few days.

When Miss Dick saw him in the morning she felt strangely diffident and did not meet his eyes. Neither of them spoke. He was very cold. She had never seen him so formal and dignified.

She did not understand it.

She helped him pack as usual, standing on the off side. He threw the cinch rope over the

top and in a moment swung the cinch hook under the horse's belly. She reached down for it and hooked the rope into it.

"All right?" he asked in a rather short voice.

"Yes, go ahead," she had replied in a tone as formal as his; "take up the slack."

Perhaps she could not throw the diamond hitch alone, but she knew now perfectly well how it should be done.

Smith made the hitch on top and threw over her end of the loop. She pulled it out and stretched it around the side pack on her side.

"Are you ready?" he asked.

"Yes," she said; "my side is all right."

Smith swung behind the horse and with his foot against its rump pulled on the cinch rope, and the diamond on the top showed true as the red ace in the pack of cards. He made a quick knot in it, and then untied the horse. It was the last one. He walked over to the little white horse that the girl rode and tightened the girth until the little animal grunted and looked around with ears laid back to see what it was all about.

"We've a bad trail to-day," remarked the man. "If it works loose before noon let me know, and I'll come back and fix it."

His tone was very formal.

"Thank you very much," she replied in an

icy voice. "I think it will hold. If it does I can fix it myself."

"Have you left anything?" he asked.

"No," she replied a little abruptly.

"Then we'll pull out," he said and mounted his horse.

They rode off down the trail.

The day had started very badly.

CHAPTER XVII

THE trail proved fairly good after all, and there were few diversions in the way of brooks to ford or halts for stopping, so Miss Dick had nothing to do but think as she rode slowly behind the pack ponies that dragged their easy pace ahead of her. She was much out of sorts. She had risen feeling very happy and had thought that her relations with her companion were going to be less formal and more natural in the future. She had intended to be her very nicest, but everything had started wrong, and she was greatly distressed at his apparent coldness and indifference. She thought about it a long time and finally she began to feel a little angry, for her pride was hurt. The more she pondered it the more annoyed she grew.

This man whom she was thinking so much about was perfectly indifferent to her. Then she recalled the scene of the night before when he had asked her name. She flushed hotly, for she suddenly realized that if he had told her that he loved her she would have collapsed utterly. She was sorry that she had told him her name.

He had only asked out of curiosity perhaps, and he had never said a word to her when she left. Probably he was again thinking of one of his odious old packhorses even before she had answered him at all, and quite without reason she cut the unoffending little white horse sharply with a switch she was carrying.

He was very much surprised and actually stopped short in the trail and looked around at her with his mild, china blue eyes in the most inquiring way in the world. She felt sorry and leaned forward and rubbed him between the ears. He went on again, but very obviously he could not understand why she had struck him.

Then she began to work herself up into the most unpleasant frame of mind imaginable. She made a feeble effort to twist her mind into believing that Smith had done something that was really an offence. But for a girl she had an unusually logical mind and she knew that he hadn't. The source of her grievance was that he was indifferent. She did not reason any more at all, but was intensely angry. Probably he was actually laughing at her, up there ahead on his lean black horse. Then she was furious with herself. The idea that she should ever even think of this man except as what he was, a trapper and a man of the woods!

Still, she couldn't help thinking he really wasn't

just that either. She must have been mad ever to have thought about him at all. It was inconceivable that she, a girl brought up in the most select and exclusive surroundings, should even look at such a man. In New York and when they travelled abroad and met all kinds of the nicest people, her father was always in a panic lest she should fancy some man who might not be worthy. What would he say if he ever imagined what had actually been in her mind the night before when she was alone with this strange quiet man? She told herself that he had hypnotized her and that she had not known what she was about. She must have been quite out of her mind.

Well, it would be different from now on.

She had been awakened from her dream and hereafter she would look back on it as a strange fit of madness engendered by the solitude of the mountains and the constant companionship with this man. She laughed a little cold, hard laugh.

Smith would have been greatly surprised if he had heard it. It was the same kind of laugh he had heard on that first night he met her. Whenever he thought of that night, he simply could not believe it was true or that the gentle, helpful girl he had since known could ever have said such cold, disagreeable things as she had said to him then.

Miss Dick felt very cynical just now.

When she got back to New York, she said to herself, it would all be quite different. Then she wished that sometime this man could see her there. Perhaps some day he might and would come around and see them in their big Fifth Avenue house. Of course he had been kind to her out here and she would ask him to do so before they parted at the railroad. Her father would thank him and give him some money. But her pique melted here, and she decided that her father wouldn't give him the money after all. She imagined the scene in New York.

The man would come around to see them. It would be in the evening, she told herself, and she would be just going out to the Opera. She thought she would have on that new Worth evening gown that she had gotten in the spring in Paris, the one with the pearl trimmings with slippers to match. She would have just a few jewels, her pearl necklace perhaps, and an ornament in her hair. He would look at her hair first. She felt a little pang of sadness, for he always did look at her hair now every day. Still she brushed away this thought, and her mind came back to this prospective meeting. She was getting a great deal of savage satisfaction out of it.

The man would be shown in and she would

greet him quite kindly. Of course he would be clean and neat, for she admitted he was always clean, especially now that he shaved every two days, but he would be awkward and self-conscious in civilized clothes. She stopped here. Something unbidden whispered that he wouldn't, after all, be in the least awkward. As a matter of fact her instinct told her that he would be just the same simple, masterful kind of man in her father's drawing-room as he had been out at that dreadful camp where she had first seen him. She struggled a little against the picture of him as being raw and uncouth, and finally gave it up entirely. Still she did think he would be embarrassed and would find it hard to realize that she was the same woman whom he had known on the trail. She would introduce him to some of her smart man friends, who would be complacently nice to him on her account.

But she wasn't getting along at all well with her picture. She did not think that even the most casual of them could treat the big man up ahead with complacence. She had an idea that he would command the respect of men anywhere under any condition. Somehow that quiet eye of his and that very firm strong mouth did not work into the rôle of the barbarian for the first time in the city.

She thought her father would like him very

much indeed. He was a strong man himself and not the least bit of a snob, though he wanted his daughter to have everything of the finest that money could buy. She thought she could even see her father's face light up with admiration. Perhaps he would say,

"There's a man, Dick, a real one."

This was not at all the right conclusion of the idea that she had started out to develop. Her intention had been to make this man appear ridiculous in her surroundings, and here she had ended up by having her father admiring him. This annoyed her. Still she thought everybody must admire such a man. How could they possibly help it, she wondered. Then her indignation suddenly melted away and she felt very small and forlorn and helpless. She wished he had liked her; she wished he had told her so last night. She didn't care who he was. She couldn't help admiring him.

It seemed to her that nearly all the men she had known at all well had always pestered her to death with silly talk. It had been a dreadful bore to her. She had never felt a twinge of sentiment for a single one of them. Here was this man whom she thought about all day long, this man who was so good and true and loyal and everything that she liked, and he was perfectly indifferent to her. Here her pride reas-

serted itself, and she felt herself growing hot, and by twelve o'clock she had for the second time become persuaded that at last she had escaped definitely from this impossible kind of dream which seemed to have gripped her these past weeks.

When they halted for noon she was so cold and distant that Smith hardly recognized her as the same girl.

When they camped for the night she was worse.

He could not understand it at all. It must have been his personal question of the night before, and while he was thinking about it he cut his finger to the bone with the hunting knife with which he had been slicing the bacon. He put his hand quickly behind his back so that the girl might not see it. It was instinctive with him to spare her pain. But she did see it, and instantly forgot all about her dignity while she helped him to tie it up. Before he did this he dug a great piece of spruce gum off a near-by tree and melted it in a spoon and then poured it still steaming on the cut. The lines in his face tightened just a shade when the almost boiling liquid touched the wound, but his hand did not tremble. What a Spartan he was, she thought!

When the finger was bound up she had a revulsion of feeling, and the next time he looked at her she said in a very formal voice—

"You needn't mind making my bed to-night, Smith ; I can do quite well on the ground now."

And she went down and sat by the river and felt very miserable.

When she looked into her tent after supper she found that he had made it just as usual, only with perhaps a little more care. Neither of them alluded to it. She thought it would look childish if she sat by herself in the tent. He would think she was sulky, or that she could not stand good-humouredly the hard life of the trail. She remembered hearing him say once that he liked to travel alone because so many men he had been with sulked in the rain and grouched after a long day. When she thought of this she came out directly and sat down on the ground in front of the fire. They were both very quiet.

Finally he asked her, apropos of nothing in particular, how she liked the white horse she was riding.

This seemed an aggravation to her, for some strange reason. She wished he wouldn't for ever be talking about the horses and getting up unexpectedly and going out to look at them. She did not even glance up at him.

"Oh, well enough," she said casually.

Smith thought she was in a very strange mood. He sat for a long time and said nothing. Finally

he began to talk about the little white horse. At first she made up her mind that she wouldn't listen. But she could not very well help it as he began to tell her about the little beast she was riding. It struck her as strange that he spoke of it for the first time now, after she had been riding the horse for days. It seemed that he was very fond of this animal, and that he had had him for seven years, ever since he first came into the mountains, barring the one year he was up in the Barren Lands. Finally she became interested in spite of herself as he told her of the long trips he had made with the horse, and of how cleverly the little beast had conducted himself in this river or in that bad bit of trail. He had never been so fond of any other horse in his life, he told her, and then he recounted to her how his four-footed companion had been stolen while he was up in the Barren Lands, and of how he had at last discovered him in quite a different part of the country with some people who had bought him from the horse thief, and how they wouldn't believe it was his until he went out to the corral and the faithful friend had recognized him at once and run to him with a glad neigh of welcome.

Miss Dick thought it was rather touching, but she did not wonder his animals liked him, for he treated them like babies, and she had never seen

him strike one in anger, no matter what the provocations of the trail might have been. Finally he stopped talking and she remembered that she was angry with him or about him. It was not quite clear in her mind, but anyway she had completely recovered from that strange madness that had taken hold of her the last weeks. Quite over it, she told herself, and she got up with a very cold "good-night, Smith," and went to her boughs.

Then when she was in bed and the dog came in and slept close to her, she put her soft little cheek against his very shaggy, whiskery one and cried. On the whole it had been a very unsatisfactory day. By and by she told herself that the crisis was past now and that in the morning she would be quite herself again.

Then she cried a little more.

She was very unhappy.

They started unusually early the next day, and it was getting dark when they went into camp well toward the head of the river they had been following ever since they crossed it on the raft. Smith was very anxious about the weather, for on the morrow they were to make the long drive over the high pass that he had been talking of so long.

During these two days that Miss Dick was having such an unhappy time in her own mind

Smith was having a much worse one in his masculine way. He was not ordinarily given to profanity, but these days he cursed profoundly and thoroughly at every obstacle that lay in the way. The last day there had been some cutting to do, and he actually welcomed the chance of attacking with his axe the great trees that lay across the path. His blade would bite deep and clean at every blow, and he would strike so hard that a little grunt would escape him. Then he would get back on his horse and curse a little.

He was taking his portion very hardly.

Never, never again, he thought to himself, could he possibly travel these trails. Every place from the camp he had first met her would recur in connexion with her. His future life in the mountains, if he ever did come back, would be a perpetual torment. He retraced in his mind all the camps that they had made together. Each one was a separate and distinct picture. In this one she had sat on a certain log with her slippers just showing under her riding skirt; in that other one there had been a great boulder against which she had leaned. He remembered just how her hair had looked against the background of that great grey rock. He would never camp there again, he told himself, never, for every time he saw that rock he would think of the girl. She would be in New York then, or Europe, and would have

utterly forgotten his existence. Other men, men who had been tutored in the arts of living the life she was used to, would be around to amuse her. Perhaps she would marry one of them. This thought was absolutely unbearable.

The idea of any other man having her made him grind his teeth with bitter anguish. He dismissed the thought and began to think of their camps again.

There was that ideal spot by the big lake where they had talked about the stars, and then too there was the cache on the Big River. He thought he liked it best as he remembered how she had been sitting there drying her hair that night he had brought in the deer. Then he thought of her hair, and slowly and carefully he took out his compass and looked at that thin little ring that the one tell-tale hair made, the one that had clung on his shirt the night he had put her to bed over on the Big River, that first night that they had camped together alone. It seemed to him that his whole life had been just a little, empty waste until he had known this girl. He did not see how he had ever dragged around all these years thinking about finding gold, and hunting game. It was all too trivial and trifling. As for his gold claims, he despised the thought of them. He might have mountains of it and sell them for untold millions, but in his eyes it was all as nothing.

He began to feel that it was unfair that all this condensed misery should have come to him. His mind turned to the girl, and once and a while he would look back as though he were trying to see if any of the packs were loose, but it was really to get a glimpse of her who rode behind.

She looked very cold and thoughtful he thought each time he had a glimpse of the small mounted figure. These two last nights in the camps had been dreadful. He did not think she cared for him, of course, at any time. That would have been too incredible, but he believed that she at least was beginning to like him and that he amused her. But the last two days he felt that she actually disliked him. He tried to tell himself that he was being treated badly, but he was too earnest and sincere to think long about himself.

He was anxious for the trip to end, for his torture was becoming intolerable, and yet at the same time he dreaded parting with her, for it was so uncertain when he might meet her again.

The last day dragged interminably, but he travelled late in order to reach the foot of the pass, for it was getting advanced in the season now, and he felt that any day might bring a change in the weather.

Neither of the travellers was in a happy mood that night, and neither spoke save in monosyllables during the entire evening.

CHAPTER XVIII

NOON of the next day found the man, the woman and their seven horses well above timber line and with nearly half of the day's journey behind them. There could be no halt until they reached the timber and horse feed that awaited them on the other side of the rugged defile that was well above 7,500 feet in altitude. A few hours after breaking camp they left the last of the green things behind them and struck into a small cleft that lay between two great razor-back mountains. Even in summer these were covered with snow and ice down toward the narrow pass that lay between two green valleys. There had already been an early snow of an inch or two, and now the whole floor of the valley was mantled in white. It became colder as they got up above the timber and the stream that was fed by the perpetual snows of the higher altitude, which they had been following, grew smaller and smaller. At last it disappeared altogether under the white, its direction only being traceable by the darkly coloured snow

where the wetness melted through to the surface.

All around them was white and silent. To Miss Dick it was very impressive and she recalled the things that Smith had said back at one of their earlier camps about the pettiness of man. She looked up at the great, stern, impassive masses of rock and ice of the mountains that towered above them and reflected that to one looking down from the summit they and their pack-train would seem as mere ants in the wilderness below. The death-like stillness too was in strong contrast to the tumble and roar of the streams she had known in the valleys, and she missed the murmur of the trees swaying in the wind. Here was not a sound save the occasional faint trickle of running water ebbing with its feeble life below the snow. When noon came they were completely out of sight of the green of the live timber that they had left, and there was nothing to be seen ahead but a diminishing perspective of snow and ice.

Near the summit they saw three mountain sheep, a great ram and two does. She saw Smith reach quickly for his rifle and, after a second's hesitation, slide it back again into its sheath that hung under his left leg. For a moment she saw nothing, but when he pointed toward the side of the pass she distinguished them, small black spots slowly moving off up the mountain. Somehow these

tiny bits of life only served to emphasize the deadness and the immensity of the inert masses of the mountains. She looked ahead. There was her companion sitting loosely on his lean, black horse. He had put on his mackinaw jacket and had turned up the collar. He was smoking, for she could see the occasional little clouds of smoke drifting from his face. Always he was looking up at the sky, and when he came back once to ask if she were getting cold she thought him more serious than usual.

The sky had been overcast when they started, but now it was getting greyer and duller and more leaden each hour. She, too, watched it and looked at it as she saw the man do, but she felt neither apprehension nor responsibility. If there were any difficulty ahead the man would solve it. What if they were caught in a snow storm? He would find his way out somehow or other. She found it impossible to feel any anxiety. She had implicit faith in her companion, and in spite of her mood she felt a vague pleasure in the trust that she had in him. She remembered his quotation from Emerson: "A single drop of manly blood the surging sea outweighs," and the thought ran through her mind that this man up ahead was more than a match for all the bulk of the mountains, and that even the elements with all their brute fury would find him ready

in some way to outwit them and carry his pack-train to safety.

Smith was worried, for he was sure that it would storm before night. There had been more snow in the pass than he had expected and towards the summit they had encountered drifts three and four feet deep where for a hundred or two yards at a time the horses floundered and plunged and snorted their way through the whiteness. All of this delayed their progress. Once he could reach the timber he cared not how much it might storm, for they could camp for a day or two if necessary, and he knew that the snow that came so early would leave the valleys the first day the sun came out.

By two in the afternoon the whole heavens were grey and the clouds hung very low. Already the ridges of the mountains were lost in the dullness. As she studied the scene about her Miss Dick was increasingly impressed with the desolation and bleakness of it all. The leaden aspect of the sky reminded her of Meissonier's painting of the retreat from Russia. The dreary tones of the snow and the lifeless greys in the clouds all seemed to suggest the bleakness and disaster that so typify that great painting. Again and again as the day advanced did her mind come back to snatches of conversations that she had had with the man.

She recalled one of those rainy days when they had been in camp, when for an hour he had talked of what he called perspective. He had said that it was one of the most fundamentally important characteristics that a man might have. She had not exactly understood what he meant, but he had explained that it was the power to see things in their relative importance, and he had told her that men and women should always have in their thoughts and underlying their actions the true realization of what importance they were in the world, and even at the best how small a factor was the life or work of a single individual. He had pointed out that the greatest men in history had been those who were able to reckon their lives at their true value, and that such men had been great because they had realized that their work, their ideals and their achievements for the good of others were of the real import and that the part they themselves played therein was only a secondary detail. When men placed their own personality first, he had said, then they soon began to fail in the greater things. The truly great men of history, he thought, were the ones that had merged their own aims and petty aspirations in the achievement of some greater good, something beyond and outside themselves. Such men left behind them the lessons of character and

idealism which lived long after the men themselves were dead and their mere physical achievements had been all but forgotten. Other men of force and ability had, by domineering ways and selfish aggrandisement, seized things for themselves while they lived, but when they were gone their lives were often forgotten in a few decades after the grave had closed over their physical bodies. She had thought it all sounded a little bit stilted and pedantic at first, but somehow the more she thought about it the truer it seemed.

This idea was in her mind to-day, and as they plodded on through the whiteness of the mountain pass she asked herself of what importance she really was to any one? Her father, of course, was fond of her and would miss her keenly. She was his only child, and as he often told her she was like her mother who had died when she was born. Who was there that would remember or mourn for her for a month should any misadventure befall her now? She had a lot of girl acquaintances who used to shop with her in the mornings and come in and have tea with her in the afternoons. She could not remember that these girls ever talked much about anything except the latest gossip of their particular set and a good deal about their new dresses and what they expected to wear at certain events

in the future. These girls kissed her and gushed over her, but she thought that none of them really liked her, and she knew that many of them said mean and spiteful things about her behind her back, for there were always some among them who were glad to tell her what the others had said. That was because they were jealous perhaps. She admitted this to herself, not because she was consciously vain but because she had really never questioned the fact that she was better looking than most of the girls. She knew that she was more attractive to men because she always had more around her than did others. She accepted it as a matter of course.

Then she asked herself if she had ever done anything particularly kind that should attach them to her. She could not recall ever having put herself out in the least for any of them. As for the men she knew, many of them admired her and had wanted to marry her, but there was not one, as she thought it over, who would suffer very keenly if he did not see her again. She was not a factor in the life of any one then, as far as she could figure it out, with the possible exception of her own father, and the affection which he gave her was because she was her mother's child, rather than because she was herself. Had she been only a niece or distant

relative she thought her father would never have cared much for her.

He was a very serious man. It was strange, she pondered, that he had not talked to her more about the serious things of life. Then she recalled that once or twice in his mild, affectionate way he had said, "My dear, don't you think you are a bit frivolous? " or "Don't you think, my daughter, that it is time you took life more seriously? "

Somehow it had never made the slightest impression on her until now. She let her mind run back over the past two or three years, with the constant round of dinners, teas, yachting trips and house parties, dances and operas, with every year or so a trip to Europe.

What had it all amounted to? she asked herself. What had it all fitted her for? To be sure she had a fair smattering of French and German and had read as much as most of the girls of her acquaintance, but she could not see that she really had given any genuine thought in all her life to any serious subject. In a vague fashion she had taken it for granted that she would marry sometime, but that meant nothing very definite to her except that she would have an establishment of her own and lead much the same life as she had always done, only in a different environment. That she would marry some one

who could give her all that she had always had, she took for granted. But it had never even crossed her mind that she would ever have to do without maids, Paris dresses, unlimited gloves, shoes to match every gown, and the thousand and one other things which she had heretofore regarded as necessities.

She thought of her last trip to Europe, and how her father had raised his eyebrows just a little when she had shown him some of her bills, with hand embroidered lingerie that had cost fifty and a hundred dollars for each small white item of finest linen. She reflected that she never paid less than a couple of hundred for her dinner gowns, and she recalled one or two that had cost nearly a thousand. She wondered in a vague way what she had cost her father in the last five years. She had no idea, as she never dreamed of keeping any accounts. It must have been a great deal. She wondered whether or not she would care to marry a girl such as herself if she were a man. What had she to give a man? She could entertain well. She knew that. Had she not often presided at her father's dinners? She remembered how proud he had looked when on one occasion abroad he had given a dinner, and his daughter had talked French to a distinguished foreigner on one side and German to an equally important personage on the other.

That was rather nice, but how much difference would that make to most men? A serious quiet man, for instance, like the one riding ahead on the lean black horse, with his alert keen eyes ever searching out the minutest detail that came within his vision? Her heart beat a little fast and she felt her face colour. She blushed very easily, did this girl, and almost her smallest emotion was reflected in her face. She was never going to think about that man again, she told herself, and she tried to divert her thoughts elsewhere. But on the contrary she discovered that her mind drifted promptly back to the same theme.

All these things that she had been and could do, would seem as utterly trifling and worthless to him. There was nothing about her that could by any possibility be an inspiration. She wished with a sudden intensity that she was one of the kind of women that he had spoken of, the kind that make men steadfast in their ideals, that inspire them to great things. She knew she wasn't, couldn't possibly be. He must feel it too, for he had talked much less seriously to her lately. He had read her character correctly, she felt, and realized that she was just a spoiled and selfish child. She imagined that he was sorry for her. Somehow she did not think that any of the things that had seemed so important

to her until just these last few weeks would appear to him as worth even a passing thought. The money, the social position, the *savoir faire* of the world of amusement and entertainment would seem to him as of no value.

She looked about her at the sullen desolation that, grim and silent, towered about her. Suddenly she realized that it meant nothing to her either, and that she would give it all a hundred times over if this man would only love her and place her on the pinnacle where he seemed to place other women. She did not care who he was, or why he was here, or anything else; for a moment she let her mind be carried away in an abandon of unreasoning emotion. Then she flushed again as her pride began to whisper in revolt.

The man was indifferent and cold, and she felt her annoyance and wounded vanity quickly driving out the other sentiments.

Suddenly she felt something cold touch her cheek. She looked down and saw a small star-like crystal clinging to her coat sleeve, for she was wearing her big blanket coat to-day. As she looked up others drifted softly after it. They were small flakes of snow, each as perfect in form and pattern as though fashioned with exquisite delicacy by some master artisan. She glanced up at the heavens. The air was full of the fine white flakes. It was snowing very gently, each

little crystal floating down as aimlessly as a feather. She looked ahead, and in the dim distance she saw just a suggestion of green beyond the white. She could not see that it was snowing any harder, but in a few minutes, when she looked again, she found that the green was no longer there.

For fifteen minutes they rode along. If it had seemed still before, it was silence materialized now. They had crossed the summit, and she thought another hour or two would certainly take them out of the pass. After a bit she looked forward again and noticed that a certain rocky elbow on the mountain which she had seen before was now completely lost in the snow. It was falling much faster, for she could see a tiny miniature drift in the fold of her sleeve.

The man ahead stopped. The horses all stopped.

He dismounted and came back to her, walking very slowly and leading his horse by the bridle. He was evidently going to speak to her. He seemed absent minded and did not look at her. But when he reached where she was sitting on the little white horse, he spoke to her very calmly.

"I am going to tail the horses together," he said, in a perfectly casual way, just as though it was something he always did about this time. "You will ride next to me."

His tone was perfectly impersonal. She had no objection to riding next him, but she did not like his authoritative manner. It seemed as though he left nothing to her own wishes in this matter.

But he was not considering her wishes. He was thinking that if her horse, or any of the others, wandered from the pack-train, he would never find them again. He had taken a bit of rope out of his pocket and was fastening it into the bridle of the white horse.

"What are you doing?" she asked with a little annoyance.

He might at least confer with her. She was not a baby to be treated as though she had nothing whatever to say as to what programme he proposed for her.

"I'm going to tail the white to my saddle horse," he said quietly.

"You're going to do nothing of the sort," she said, her pique suddenly coming to the surface. "I'm quite able to follow you without being tied to your horse. I'm not a baby, you know."

He said nothing, but went on with what he was doing. When the rope was in the bridle he made a loop in the other end and took a half hitch in the tail of his own horse and then drew it tight. He tested it a few times.

"That'll hold, I guess," he said, just as though he were quite alone. "Either the white horse comes or the black tail stays."

The girl was bubbling with indignation. He had not paid the slightest attention to her protest.

"Will you kindly untie my horse," she began in a very cold voice and then stopped.

The man was looking at her impassively.

"Please don't argue," he said; "really we have no time to discuss it. Honestly, I know what I am about;" and he proceeded to fasten a packhorse to the tail of the white.

"I think you are perfectly horrid," she said between her teeth.

It was inexcusable his acting like this. Her whole stubborn will was in rebellion.

"I hate you," she snapped.

The man stopped his adjustment of the tails.

"Oh," he said, and then he added, "I'm sorry."

Then he went on as though nothing had happened. The fact was he was worried. He had but one idea and that was to get this girl to timber as quickly as possible. He had barely heard her protests. What he was doing seemed obvious to him. Her last little snappy comment affected him almost as though she had slapped him. He felt a dull pain in his heart. He did not think, of course, that she cared for him,

but her cold voice and evident bitterness hurt him. He knew so little of women that he supposed she meant it ; he said nothing, but continued quietly to tie the horses together.

When he had finished he came back to where he had left his black horse standing by the white one.

Zing sat expectantly in the snow. It all seemed very interesting to him. While Smith had been with the other horses Miss Dick had had an impulse to get off and undo the knot. But she did not move. Something told her that it would be quite futile to set her will against this man's. He would be very kind and very quiet, but he would do as he thought best. She knew that. So she did nothing, but was very indignant. If he had only put his programme in the form of a suggestion she would have been perfectly satisfied. She remembered the way he used to say "We will camp here, if it suits you." Now it made no difference to him whether it suited her or not. She felt the most intense desire to assert her independence. But she did not move. Something told her that this was a poor time to try.

When Smith had finished he took his horse by the bridle and started slowly forward. He did not mount, but led the horse. The valley between the ranges that formed the pass was

widening out and was now a quarter of a mile wide. Already the mountains on both sides were barely visible through the falling snow. The air was absolutely still. It seemed incredible that there ever could be enough of these fine small flakes to make any difference, yet already the fresh snow was an inch deep. Smith knew that it would soon be darker and that it was possible even in the narrowness of the pass to get completely turned about.

For half an hour they moved steadily forward. At no time was there any perceptible difference in the fall of snow, but after an hour it was quite noticeable that there was a great change. Now the mountains could not be seen at all and only a few hundred yards ahead and as many behind were visible to the eye. The quiet was more enveloping every moment. It seemed impossible that these small, inoffensive flakes could ever be a menace. They came down so gently and so quietly, and each in itself was such a harmless and perfect little thing. The man was thinking to himself that the pass was much longer than he had remembered. After a while he looked at his watch. It was past four, and it was getting dark. The snow too was falling faster. He could not see fifty yards ahead and when he looked back he could barely distinguish the outline of the last horse in the line. The

girl sat in her saddle in absolute silence. She was wondering if he was worried. She felt no anxiety. She was sure that he would be quite adequate to the emergency.

Five o'clock came. Smith looked now at his compass repeatedly to see if his general direction was right. He felt pretty sure of his own sense of locality, but he had been lost before in the snow, and he meant to take no chances. By half-past five it was very much darker and the snow was falling even faster. He could not see the last horse at all. He began to wonder now if there were any chance of his having been turned around. Still he said nothing. Once he stopped and turned about and leaned close to his horse. Miss Dick wondered if he had lost his way. A little wave of apprehension swept over her. Then he struck a match. He was only lighting his pipe. She thought his face was exceptionally calm and impassive. In reality he had felt no such acute anxiety since the trip began. Still he kept on.

In another hour he told himself it would be quite dark. She noticed that he was constantly shuffling his feet through the snow. Once or twice he stooped and felt about with his hand. She wondered what on earth he was doing. At last she saw him stop and heard him laugh a little quiet laugh all to himself. She could not

understand it. He was still digging and in a moment he stood up. He had a small stunted bit of brush in his hand. He threw it away and went on again. Once more he stopped and picked up a bit of a dead stick. She was very curious.

"What is it?" she asked at last.

"Stick," he said laconically; "we'll be in the timber soon."

By and by out of the gathering darkness she began to see dim forms looming up near by them.

"Brush," she heard him say to her over his shoulder.

Finally he stopped and for a minute or two she saw him stand absolutely still. Then he turned a little to his left.

"Trail's this way, I think," he said in an indifferent voice.

Again he stopped. He was listening.

At last she could hear a faint trickling of running water. A hundred yards more and they came out beside a small stream.

"I was getting a little curious," he said casually, "to know just where this stream was. I had figured on hitting it more than an hour ago. I haven't been through this pass for five years and I guess my memory's getting bad. I think I must have gotten a little off the old trail,"

he added apologetically. "I know just where we are now. We'll camp soon," and he lapsed into silence.

It seemed wonderful to her that he could find his way so easily. It reminded her of one time when she stood on the bridge of a great liner as they were going up the English Channel in a fog. To her it had seemed impossible that they could ever find their way, yet the great steamer had moved slowly and with apparent ease into the harbour of Plymouth and tied up at just the buoy where she always made fast. By and by they were in a small growth of timber, but still Smith moved on. At last he kept stopping. He was evidently looking for something. It was so dark that it was hard to see fifteen feet away. Then she heard him give a little exclamation of relief.

"Ah," he said, "here we are," and he turned off at right angles. All she saw was a great rock that stood near by. For a hundred yards he kept on. Suddenly she saw that they were in heavy timber.

He helped her off the horse. She was very cold and stiff.

"Please stand right here under this tree," he said to her; "and I'll guarantee that you will feel much better in about ten minutes."

In a few seconds he had a fire started. He

knew just where everything was on the horses and he unpacked her tent first. In half an hour it was up and she was seated on a pile of bedding in the door of her little canvas abode drinking in the warmth of the fire. It seemed to her she had never been more comfortable. She realized now that the man had known exactly what he was about all along. When supper was ready they ate it in silence.

At last he said, "Well, I'm glad that's over. We've only one more bad stream to cross and five days from now you can sleep in an hotel."

She made no reply. She thought it very objectionable of him to seem so pleased about it.

CHAPTER XIX

THE snow had stopped before they had breakfasted, and two hours after they had started from their night's resting place they were down in the valley of a turbulent blue stream that was almost three thousand feet lower in altitude than the summit of the pass they had crossed the day before. Here there was not a sign of the snow storm that had seemed such a menace only a few short hours earlier. The sun came out about ten o'clock in the morning and the air was as clear as a cleanly wiped lens. The mountains all around them stood out sharp against the sky with their mantles of soft snow that had fallen the day before and during the night.

The trail was very fine now for they were within a few days' travel of the railroad, and as Smith told her when they stopped for noon it had been travelled at least half a dozen times that summer. In the afternoon the narrow ribbon of the way wound among the trees, every now and then coming out close to the boiling torrent. It was one of the most attractive

bits of going and in the most ideal weather that they had experienced for weeks.

Neither the man nor the girl was happy or satisfied. She had recognized the wisdom of her companion's course on the pass even before they had camped for the night, but something within her rankled just the same. She felt an intense desire to show this man that she was not the incompetent creature he seemed to think her. As for Smith, he felt very blue and very morose. It appeared to him that he blundered in all his relations to her and that nothing he did was understood by her or taken in the right spirit. He never for an instant attached the slightest blame to the girl but kept telling himself that it was his fault, that he was crude, tactless and every other term which implied inadequacy. The girl was inclined to be very silent, but Smith, no matter what he felt, always appeared the same good-humoured companion that he had been from the first. It was hard talking to her, but night and noon he would sit quietly by, chatting of the trail, and the incidents of the day or anything else that he thought might divert her. Thus they moved on down the valley for two days.

"We will have to cross the Clearwater to-day sometime," he had told her, "and I wouldn't wonder if we could ford it without any trouble,

as the water is getting pretty low everywhere. In the spring and summer I have always rafted it or else swum the horses. But I think we'll make it all right. If we do we can get through to the point of rock near the canon to-night and that's an easy two days' travel from the railroad."

They had made a fairly early start and a little before noon they came out upon a long flat, below which their own stream of the last few days joined the larger volume of the Clearwater, which here was flowing silently and deep. They rode out on the beach and Smith sat for a moment looking up and down the river. The stream was wide here and he thought it could be forded in safety. Still he was not willing to take any chances.

"If I were alone," he said to the girl, "I believe I'd plunk in right here, but I guess we'd better not try it. There's a safer place a little above." He paused and continued to gaze at the river.

At last he said, "I'll tell you what we'd better do. You wait here and hold the horses and I'll go up and have a look at the river just around the bend above here, before we decide where we'll tackle it."

"All right," she said indifferently, "I'll wait here."

Smith got off his horse and tied him up to a tree and walked slowly up the bank of the river. She could see that he was sizing it up with his practised eye. At last he disappeared around the bend.

She sat looking absently off across the water.

"If he had been alone he would have gone ahead," she said to herself. She felt a little bitter as she thought that she was an obstacle to his doing what he would have done alone. She looked across the stream. It seemed fairly safe. Then an idea occurred to her.

Why not try it by herself?

When he came back he would find her on the other side. Perhaps he wouldn't think then that she was so hopelessly incompetent and so altogether useless. She glanced up the river. There was no sign of him. She felt just a little uncertainty about trying it alone. However, her hesitation lasted but an instant. Whatever else she was she was no coward, nor had she ever been. She kicked her little white horse gently with the heels of her shoes and pulled up his head, for he had been feeding slowly along the bank of the river. She had been in many fords of smaller streams with her white pony and knew that he was good in the water. She urged him into the stream. He moved out very slowly, splashing prodigiously with his small

feet. It did not seem very deep and she went twenty or thirty feet before it came above his knees. Then he stepped down a little and the water came up to the top of her stirrups. It was not above fifty feet to the opposite bank and it did not look any deeper to her than where they now were.

The little horse stopped and looked back inquiringly. But she thought they were already in the worst part and gently urged him forward. He took one step forward very carefully and stopped again. She kicked him a little harder with her boot heel and he took another step and plunged in up to his neck and the next instant was in swimming water. She felt his body go quite beneath the water which was now running well above her own waist as she sat in her saddle. The shore was slipping by them at an alarming rate and she realized that they were going down stream very fast. She was frightened.

"Turn him back this way. Turn him back," she heard Smith's voice shouting to her, and a wave of comfort swept over her.

He had come around the bend above just as the white horse plunged into the deep water. He was running along the shore now with his lariat rope, which he had snatched off his saddle, in his hand. He knew that the channel swept

in close to the shore below and if the horse couldn't land before that he felt sure he could drop the rope over his head and pull him out. The girl was not used to swimming a horse in a swiftly running stream and in her excitement she let her reins fall on the horse's neck.

Smith saw the danger instantly.

"Hold up your reins," he yelled, but he was too late, for at that instant the little animal got one of his front feet through the bridle reins and in another instant disappeared in the current. For a second both horse and rider went out of sight and then both reappeared a few feet apart. The poor little horse threw his head out of the water with a terrified cry, but the rein now entangled in his front foot prevented his swimming, and again his head went down under the water and his little white stomach rolled uppermost and then over and over and out of sight in the current.

But the man was not watching the horse. The girl evidently knew how to swim, and he thanked God for that; but she had on her heavy riding boots and all her clothing, and though her little chin was above the water he saw that she was making no progress. He ran to the place where the current swung in. He had too much experience to try and swim after her. Her face was very white and her eyes looked

frightened. Her mouth was closed firmly and she was striking out with all her strength. He threw off his coat and plunged in, and just as he did so he heard her give a little low cry and saw her suddenly turn over in the water.

The next instant he was in the icy stream. For a second he could see nothing of her, but a moment later the brown dress bobbed up not two yards away. With a couple of powerful strokes he was by her side, but just as he reached for her she went beneath the surface once more. A second later she appeared again, and this time he got his hands on her and holding her by the collar of her coat he struck out with one arm and both legs for the shore.

For a moment it seemed as though he could not make it, but finally his feet touched gravel bottom and he was soon in wading water. He picked up the little body, just as he had done that first night when she went to sleep by the campfire. But this time there was neither embarrassment nor nervousness lest she should see him. Her eyes were half closed and her head hung loose on his shoulder while her arm swung limp by his side. Her mouth was open just a little and her small white teeth were a little apart.

A fear such as the man had never in his life

known seized him. He felt as though the whole universe were in the balance, instead of one small wilful girl. He laid her down on the ground. Her head settled to one side and a little water ran out of her mouth. For an instant he feared that she was dead and a perfect panic ran through him.

He felt her wrist. He could detect no pulse.

He put his hand against her wet and dripping dress. Still he could feel nothing. He glanced down at her waist. It was a curious affair with a lot of small buttons and hooks and he had often wondered how she got into it alone. For a moment his hands fumbled with the buttons. But his fingers were numb with the icy water. He uttered a sudden curse and reaching around pulled out his hunting knife, which he always kept sharp and keen. In his fingers he gathered up a little bunch of cloth on her left side and with a quick movement slipped the point through and then with a single jerk he ripped a hole six inches long, just as he would cut open the side of a deer that he had killed. He slipped his hand in next to her skin and around under her left breast. It was warm and firm and as soft as satin. He passed his hand close up against her rib. For a moment it seemed as though his own heart beat so that he could feel nothing else. But he was a man of iron will and not

given to losing his self-control. He pressed his hand close and his eyes looked absently out across the river.

"Thank God," he muttered at last, for he felt just a tiny flutter beneath the silky softness of the bare white skin. He rose quickly and slipped off his coat and making a pillow of it placed it under her head. Then kneeling above her he grasped the arms just below the elbows and slowly drew them upward and outward and thus expanded her chest. Then he brought the arms slowly back again, pressing the elbows against the ribs and so forcing the air out of her lungs. He had not worked thus for above three minutes when the eyelids fluttered and the girl opened her eyes. For several seconds she looked steadily into his. She was dazed.

"Where am I? What has happened?" she murmured.

He did not look at her face but knelt beside her and began to chafe her hands. They were very cold. Little by little the colour came back into her cheeks.

"I remember now," she said wearily. "Where's the little white horse?" and she looked at him anxiously.

"Never mind the horse as long as you are all right," he said in a very low voice which shook a trifle. "Please lie quietly here now

while I make a fire and put up your tent. I think we will camp here for to-day."

She closed her eyes. She felt very cold and began to shiver. In a moment the man was back and had thrown half a dozen blankets over her. She made no protest. He knelt beside her and very carefully tucked her in on all sides, first lifting her and slipping a blanket under her. She felt too weak to make any protest. Somehow it seemed perfectly natural for him to be wrapping her up in this way. While she lay there Smith worked like a demon putting up the tent and building a great fire just as he had that night they had made their camp at the cache on the Big River. He soon had some water boiling and before he let her go into the tent he gave her a good stiff drink of hot water and brandy. Then he placed her dunnage bag in the tent and left her that she might get into some dry clothes.

It was past noon now and the sun was shining warm and bright and he had no fears that she would be much the worse for the affair. He stood looking into the fire before he let down the tent flap. He was cold and wet but a great warmth of gratitude beat at his heart. He had known that this girl meant a lot to him, but until now it seemed as though he had never begun to realize how much. He uttered a prayer of

the deepest thankfulness and then turned back and walked down stream. He wanted to see if there was any trace of the horse.

He followed down the bank until he came to where the little blue stream emptied into it. He had brought his axe, and remembering where the smaller water ran through a cañon a mile above, he went up there and felled a log across. It was narrow here and his ten inch tree lay from side to side. It was fifty feet above the torrent that boiled below. Balancing himself with his axe he walked across. It had no terrors for him, as his head was steady. Then he followed the stream back to its mouth and went on down the big river for several miles.

At last he sat down dejectedly on a fallen tree. It was no use. He had not thought of the horse until the girl had spoken, and from the first he had been sure that there was but little hope that his small white friend would ever get out.

"If he could only have broken that bridle rein," he kept repeating to himself, "the little devil would have gotten out easy enough. But with his little patient feet tangled up in that he never had a show. Poor little beggar!" And as he sat a tear stole down his cheek, for he was very fond of the little white horse.

At last he got up. He would go to the next

bend, he thought, and if there was no sign of the pony he would give it up. When he rounded the clump of trees where the river swept to the south he found what he was looking for. There under a great sweeper he saw a bit of white being sozzled up and down in the river as the tree swayed in the current. When he came nearer he saw that one of the stirrups had caught on a snag and that it held the body. He cut the tree and landed both tree and horse in an eddy below. He examined the little cayuse carefully. One forefoot had been put through the loose rein and the little head was drawn down tight against the knee of the forefoot.

For a long time the man stood looking at his little friend. At last he stooped quickly and lifted up the small head and gently kissed the pink nose.

"Seven years," he said softly, "seven years; poor little boy; this is the first time you ever failed, and it wasn't your fault either."

Then he stood up quickly and with his handkerchief brushed away the moisture from his eyes. He took off the saddle and bridle and without looking again turned quickly on his heel and disappeared in the direction of the camp.

It was after five when he came in.

Miss Dick was dry, and when he came out of

the brush she was cooking supper. She glanced up quickly and her face glowed a little. He stopped and looked at her. Then she noticed that he was carrying a saddle on his shoulder and that in his hand he held the bridle which she recognized as having been hers. For a moment she said nothing. Then in a very quiet voice she said,

"The little white horse? Did you find him?"

"Yes," he said slowly and with deep feeling, "I found him. Under a sweeper in the river, three miles below here."

He walked slowly over to the tree beneath which his saddles were stacked and carefully placed the saddle which he was carrying. When he turned around the girl had her face in her hands.

She was sobbing softly. He came over to her and gently placed his hand on her shoulders. She did not look up but from behind her hands she murmured:

"Oh, I'm so sorry. Can you ever forgive me?"

For the second time a great impulse to take her in his arms seized the man. But he did not. He only said in a very gentle voice:

"There, there, don't feel so badly."

Then he set to work to finish the supper that the girl had begun.

CHAPTER XX

THE next morning Smith built a raft and a little before noon they crossed the Clearwater and that night camped at the point of rock by the cañon.

Neither he nor the girl all that day nor during the evening when they made their camp, made an allusion to the incident in the river and the loss of the little white horse. Miss Dick was very meek and very humble. It seemed to her that the last vestige of her pride had oozed away and she even felt in a vague sort of way that it would be a satisfaction if the man would somehow censure her for what she had done the day before. But he never mentioned it and in his bearing showed nothing which was even akin to criticism. He had pondered over it a great deal during the afternoon as they had ridden along. Why had she done it, he wondered? But he could not understand her notion in the slightest degree. In his mind he felt only a great and intense gratitude that she had been spared. Beyond that nothing made any difference.

He had been afraid that she would try and make some explanation, or would thank him for coming to her rescue. He felt that if she did he would be greatly embarrassed.

But the girl was moved far too deeply for any such conventional utterance. She did not even consider it. She recognized that but for him she would certainly have been drowned. She was glad in an indefinite kind of a way that she had not been, but she felt a much deeper satisfaction that he had saved her. She remembered the look of anguish on his face when she had first opened her eyes. She recalled again the gentle tones in which he had spoken to her. She felt somehow that the shadows of convention and formality were dissolving between them. She no longer tried to assume any attitude toward him, but allowed herself to be absolutely natural. She knew that he felt very badly about the loss of his horse and again and again she remembered all that he had told her about the seven years of companionship that had existed between him and his white pony.

She would try and make it up to him, she told herself, and all that day she endeavoured to be as useful and helpful about the camp as she knew how. Whatever of formality, dignity and coldness artificial barriers had raised between the two was swept away. She

no longer cared in the least about his clothes, his past or his future. To her he was just the man whom in the last few weeks she had come to know and understand better than any man she had ever known in her life. She forgot all her past annoyance at what she had set down as his indifference.

She wished that he might come to love her, for she knew instinctively that she experienced for him that which she would never again feel for another. There was no longer any introspective analysis, no more did she ponder over her position in life and that of the man. She did not even care what her father or her friends might think. She told herself that she was in no way fitted to share his life, and her instinct told her that even if he should ever come to care for her it would be a dreadful change for her to adapt herself to a life filled with privations and perhaps even without comforts. Neither was she carried away with any romantic notions. What she had passed through had given her a sense of true values that she had never before known. In her mind she compared her future as she had always imagined it with what it might be were this man to take it in his hands. Her keener judgment told her that after the first novelty of romance had worn off she might have to face with him the possibility of a thousand

things she had never known—poverty, economy and the cynical sneers of her friends. She did not in the least minimize how much she would dislike all these things.

On the other hand she asked herself how she could ever go back to her old life. It would seem vapid, vain and empty. Always would the picture of this man of ideals be with her. She knew that she could give up the conventional life, if necessary. Something told her that she could never give up the man. She concealed nothing from herself now. If this man would come to love her she would give him everything she had—mind, soul and body. He was a strong man and together they could do whatsoever things he set himself to do. She felt a wave of strength sweep over her. She knew in her own mind that she was capable of meeting any issue of life that might be in store for her, if only she could have this man to lean upon. She did not tell herself that she wanted hardship or poverty or any of the other things that being with him might mean, but she did know now with a calm definiteness that amounted to a certainty that she could complacently go through whatever the future might bring. She no longer felt any pride in herself or in her attainments. The man, she thought, knew just what she was, a selfish wilful girl, spoiled by money and a life

that had bred within her no realization of obligations to any one outside herself. She thought over all the mean and petty traits that she had shown him since they first met, arrogance, incompetence, selfishness, vanity and wilfulness. What, she asked herself, had she to give him?

For a long time she thought about it. She had nothing, she finally decided, but her love—a love which she knew instinctively would be permanent and unchangeable—a love that would be capable of any sacrifice. The other things she had to give him were as nothing. And love to her seemed but an inadequate gift.

For the first time in her life she had touched bed rock.

What she held so lightly was now the one thing in all the world that a woman can give that is of value beyond anything that money can buy. Her mind was filled with humility and meekness.

The woman had found herself, yet she knew it not.

* * * * *

The next day they started early and made two long drives.

Their last camp was in a bunch of spruce, close beside a small stream which ran bubbling and murmuring over the rocks.

They camped late.

Both the man and the girl were very quiet.

For the last time he made her bed with the most infinite care. For their supper he made some griddle cakes which she had always said were the very best thing that he cooked. After they had finished, he took his axe and cut down a big tree and made a campfire, the flames of which leapt ten feet in the air. With more than ordinary care he fixed up a place for the girl to sit. His heart was heavy and with every act there was within him an aching pain, for he kept saying to himself that it was for the last time. These two days past she had been gentle and helpful. He felt that she had twined herself so within the very fibre of his being that with her going would come the end of everything for him. It was like an impending death. He could not imagine what he could do after he had seen her on the train. It would be like turning back from the grave of a loved one lost, and returning to the empty house. To-morrow night at this time, he told himself, he and his dog would be sitting around a campfire by themselves, and she who sat there now looking into the fire would be whirling eastward in a Pullman car.

He brushed the picture from his mind. It was impossible to face.

He looked at the girl. She was sitting on a big log holding her hat in her hands, a hat now much battered and bedraggled. Her hair was

loosely arranged and great waves of it hung over her small pink ears. She seemed very thoughtful and a little sad as she sat there.

Never had she seemed so winsome and altogether desirable, and never so absolutely unobtainable. In spite of himself a long sigh escaped him. She looked up at him quickly. He was gazing into the fire.

She thought he had never looked so much the strong reliant man. But she said nothing and leaned over to pat the dog who lay at her feet.

At last he spoke in a very low voice.

"This is our last camp," he said.

She did not answer. It made no difference to her, he thought. He looked up at her. Her head was bent very low, but as he watched her he saw a little tear steal down her cheek. For a moment he felt as though each drop of blood in his body had suddenly gone to his heart and then slowly it began to flow through every part of his being again, and with it came a warmth and glow that seemed to lift him completely out of himself. He shut his teeth and his big strong hands clenched so that the sinews stood out like cords. His eyes rested on the girl with an intensity and a longing that he could not master even if he tried. He did not try. As he watched her the whole camp and the trees and the fire

seemed to fade away. All he saw was just the little girl sitting there with eyes on the ground, and her small hand resting on the dog.

To him there was nothing else in all the world, on earth, or in heaven, but just this one woman.

The girl felt his eyes upon her. She breathed a little quickly and he could see her breast rising and falling. For just a moment she looked up at him, and for the fraction of a second their eyes met. She looked quickly down and a wave of colour swept from her white throat to the roots of her hair.

She felt very weak and her heart seemed to skip a beat and then make three all at once. She knew that she was his and that if he wanted her he had but to take her. Yet her womanly reticence and the innate modesty of a maiden made her shrink a little with a feeling half akin to fear. She rose to her feet and turned toward her tent.

The face of the man twitched nervously.

"Mary," he said in a low voice that shook with feeling.

She stopped. She was trembling all over.

"Yes," she said, in such a small subdued voice that he barely caught the sound of the 's.'

In one step he was beside her. He placed his hand gently on her arm and turned her around.

She made no resistance. Her face was flushed and her small mouth trembled. She did not look at him. For a moment he held her by both elbows. Then in a voice vibrant with tenderness he began.

"Mary! is it possible?" and he stopped.

She answered very softly the unfinished question.

"Yes," she whispered, "of course it's possible," and then she looked up at him with a depth of tenderness and love in her luminous grey eyes that made the man's heart throb. Without a word his arms slipped about her and he drew her close to his blue flannel shirt. He held her so tightly that he could feel the heart beneath her small firm breast beating against his own great chest. For a moment she hid her head on his shoulder and when she raised her face to his, her eyes looked into his deep blue eyes. Her little mouth was half open and he could see her even white teeth. She was so near that he could feel her warm breath on his cheek. Without taking her eyes from his face she said in a very meek little voice--

"You haven't said you love me yet," and she did not withdraw her lips from him as he kissed her.

He released her just a little and she slipped her arms around his neck as she said softly—

"I want to be like one of those women you talk about, one of those true, strong women who help their men. I am praying that the miracle may happen and that I too may sometime be an inspiration to——" she paused and another little wave of colour flushed her face and her eyes fell as she whispered so low that he could barely hear her, "to my husband."

"Mary," he said, "Mary," and nothing more.

Over by the campfire sat the dog. His shaggy head was a little on one side. One ear was pricked up. He must have approved, for his stump of a tail twitched vigorously in the dry leaves on which he sat.

THE END.

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